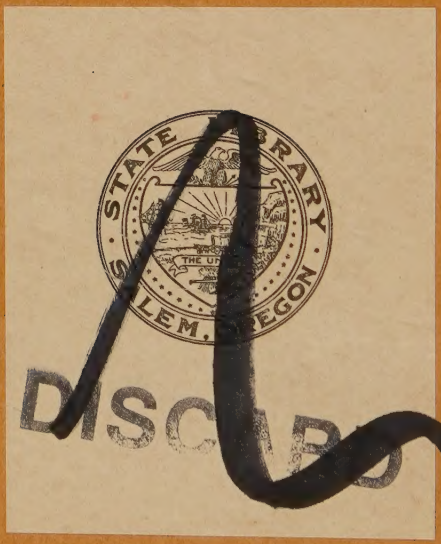

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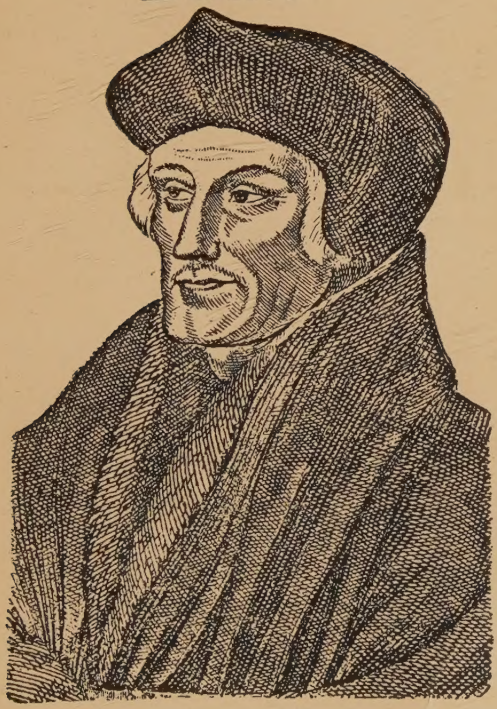

ERASMUS

IN

PRAISE OF FOLLY

WITH PORTRAIT, LIFE OF ERASMUS, AND HIS EPISTLE TO SIR THOMAS MORE.

Illustrated with many curious Engravings, Designed, Drawn, and Etched by HANS HOLBEIN.

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PETER ECKLER, PUBLISHER,
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PUBLISHER'S PREFACE.

THE works of Erasmus, which have so greatly enriched the literature of the world, have survived the lapse of centuries that have passed; and, because they contain that "one touch of nature which makes the whole world kin," they will survive the lapse of untold centuries yet to come.

His description of the bigotry and superstition—the ignorance and credulity of the masses of his day, is as true now as it was when first given to the world; and his account of the pleadings and preachings—the pretensions and presumptions of the dominant priesthood—is as applicable to the twentieth, as to the fifteenth century in which it was written.

Under the pleasing mask of Folly our author has uttered truths which are indeed sublime, and in the witty language of the Jester he has exposed the fallacies of that Faith which has, not inaptly, been defined by an *inspired* writer in the New Testament, as "the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for."

Like the late ROBERT G. INGERSOLL, ERASMUS was above all things a critic, and he has *most severely criticised the priesthood of his day;* while our talented American orator, from his tolerant spirit, and from the innate kindness of his nature, was inclined to mercy, and looked with eyes of pity and commiseration upon the entire priestly fraternity, they being, unfortunately, the inheritors of ancient ignorance and error,—which, indeed, they did not originate, and from which they have not the intelligence and resolution to free their minds.

From the secure Citadel of Truth, armed with the weapons of reason and satire, Erasmus has in this work severely bombarded the strongholds of Faith,—that faith which is founded on ignorance and superstition—and his reward has been the continued popularity of his writings to the present day, and the world-wide recognition of his unquestioned talents.

Perhaps no writer that ever lived could excel or even equal Erasmus in painting a word-picture as vivid and realistic as an object is reflected in a mirror placed before it. His well-known description of old age, may serve as an example :

"Some decrepit old fellows, that look as hollow as the grave into which they are falling, that rattle in the throat at every word they speak, that can eat no meat but what is tender enough to suck, that have more hair on their beard than they have on their head, and go stooping toward the dust they must shortly return to—whose skin seems already dressed into parchment, and their bones already dried to a skeleton—these shadows of men shall be wonderfully ambitious of living longer, and therefore fence off the attacks of age with all imaginable sleights and impostures." p. 108.

On page 116 we are told that, "in the infancy of the world, ignorance was as much the parent of happiness as it has since been of devotion," that in his day "the lawyers got the estates to themselves which they were employed to recover for their clients, while in the mean time the poor divine shall have the lice crawl upon his thread-bare gown, before he can get money enough to purchase a new one."

The affinity of Christianity with Folly, and, incidentally, its divergence from Wisdom, is clearly shown.

"It is observable that the Christian Religion seems to have some relation to Folly, and no alliance at all with wisdom. Of the truth whereof, if you desire farther proof than my bare word, you may please first to consider that children, women, old men, and fools, led as it were by a secret impulse of nature, are always most constant in repairing to church, and most zealous, devout, and attentive in the performance of the several parts of divine

service; nay, the first promulgators of the gospel, and the first converts to christianity, were men of plainness and simplicity, wholly unacquainted with secular policy or learning.

"Farther, there are none more silly, or nearer their wits' end, than those who are too superstitiously religious. They are profusely lavish in their charity; they invite fresh affronts by an easy forgiveness of past injuries; they suffer themselves to be imposed upon by laying claim to the innocence of the dove; they make it the interest of no person to oblige them, because they will love and *do good to their enemies*, as much as to their most endearing friends; they banish all pleasure, feeding upon the penance of watching, weeping, fasting, sorrow and reproach; they value not their lives, but with St. Paul, *wish to be dissolved*, and covet the fiery trial of martyrdom: in a word, they seem altogether so destitute of common sense, that their soul seems already separated from the dead and inactive body. And what else can we imagine all this to be than downright madness?" p. 313.

It would be difficult to surpass the following severe but truthful criticism of the monkish fraternity.

"The next to these [Divines] are another sort of brainless fools, who style themselves Monks, or members of religious orders, though they assume, both titles very unjustly: for as to the last, they have very little religion in them; and as to the former, the etymology of the word Monk implies a solitariness, or being alone; whereas they are so thick abroad that we cannot pass any street or alley without meeting them: and I cannot imagine which degree of men could be more hopelessly wretched if I [Folly] did not stand their friend, and buoy them up in that lake of misery, which by the engagements of a religious vow they have voluntarily immerged themselves into.

"But when these sort of men are so unwelcome to others, as that the very sight of them is thought ominous, I yet make them highly in love with themselves, and fond admirers of their own happiness. The first step whereunto they esteem a profound ignorance, thinking carnal knowledge a great enemy to spiritual welfare, and they seem confident of becoming greater proficients in divine mysteries, the less they are influenced with any human learning.

"Among these, some make a good and profitable trade by beggary, going about from house to house, not like the apostles, to break, but to beg their bread, nay, they thrust themselves into all public houses, come aboard the passage-boats, get into the traveling wagons, and omit no opportunity of time or place for craving people's charity, and doing a great deal of injury to common highway beggars by interfering with their traffic of alms.

"It is amusing to observe how they regulate their actions, as it were by weight and measure, to so exact a proportion, as if the whole loss of their religion depended upon the omission of the least punctilio.

"Thus they must be very critical in the precise number of knots requisite for tying on their sandals; what distinct colors their respective habits should be, and of what material made; how broad and long their girdles; how big and in what fashion their hoods; whether their bald crowns be to a hair's-breadth of the right cut; how many hours they must sleep, at what minute rise to prayers, etc." p. 226.

On page 269 we are told that the Monks:

"Never consider that their shaven crown is a token that they should pare off and cut away all the superfluous lusts of this world, and give themselves wholly to divine meditation; but instead of this, our bald-pated priests think they have done enough if they do but mumble over such a fardel of prayers, which it is a wonder if God should hear or understand, when they whisper them so softly, and in so unknown a language, which they can scarce hear or understand themselves. This they have in common with other mechanics, that they are most subtle in the craft of getting money, and wonderfully skilled in their respective dues of tithes, offerings, perquisites, etc.

"Thus they are all content to reap the profit, but as to the burden, that they toss as a ball from one hand to another, and assign it over to any they can get or hire. For as secular princes have their judges and subordinate ministers to act in their name, and supply their stead; so ecclesiastical governors have their deputies, vicars, and curates, nay, and many times turn over the whole care of religion to the laity. The laity, supposing they have nothing to do with the church (as if their baptismal vow did not initiate them members of it), make it over to the priests; of the priests again, those that are secular, thinking their title implies them to be a little too profane, assign this task over to the regulars, the regulars to the monks, the monks bandy it from one order to another, till it light upon the mendicants; they lay it upon the carthusians, which order alone keeps honesty and piety among them, but really keep them so close that nobody could ever yet see them.

"Thus the Popes, thrusting out their sickle into the harvest of profit, leave all the other toil of spiritual husbandry to the bishops, the bishops bestow it upon the pastors, the pastors on their curates, and the curates commit it to the mendicants, who return it again to such as well know how to make good advantage of the flock by securing the benefit of their fleece."

Many subjects beside the priesthood and christianity are critically and intelligently discussed by Erasmus throughout this work, which the intelligent reader will doubtless appreciate and enjoy.

PETER ECKLER.

THE LIFE OF ERASMUS.

ERASMUS, so deservedly famous for his admirable writings, the vast extent of his learning, his great candor and moderation, and for being one of the chief restorers of the Latin tongue on this side the Alps, was born at Rotterdam, on the 28th of October, in the year 1467. The anonymous author of his life (commonly printed with his Colloquies of the London edition) is pleased to tell us that *de anno quo natus est apud batavos, non constat.* And if he himself wrote the life which we find before the Elzevir edition, said to be *Erasmo autore*, he does not particularly mention the year in which he was born, but places it *circa annum 67 supra millesimum quadringentesimum.* Another Latin life, which is prefixed to the above-mentioned London edition, fixes it in the year 1465; as does his epitaph at Basil. But as the inscription on his statue at Rotterdam, the place of his nativity, may reasonably be supposed to be the most authentic, we have followed that.

His mother was the daughter of a physician at Sevenbergen in Holland, with whom his father contracted an acquaintance, and had correspondence with her on promise of marriage, and was actually contracted to her. His father's name was Gerard; he was the youngest of ten brothers, without one sister coming between, for

which reason his parents (according to the superstition of the times) designed to consecrate him to the church. His brothers liked the notion, because, as the church then governed all, they hoped, if he rose in his profession, to have a sure friend to advance their interest; but no importunities could prevail on Gerard to turn ecclesiastic. Finding himself continually pressed upon so disagreeable a subject, and not being able longer to bear it, he was forced to fly from his native country, leaving a letter for his friends, in which he acquainted them with the reason of his departure, and that he should never trouble them again. Thus he left her who was to have been his wife, big with child, and made the best of his way to Rome. Being an admirable master of the pen, he made a very genteel livelihood by transcribing most authors of note (for printing was not then in use). He for some time lived at large, but afterwards applied close to study, made great progress in the Greek and Latin languages, and in the civil law; for Rome at that time was full of learned men. When his friends knew he was at Rome, they sent him word that the young gentlewoman whom he had courted for a wife was dead; upon which, in a melancholy fit, he took orders, and turned his thoughts wholly to the study of divinity. He returned to his own country, and found to his grief that he had been imposed upon; but it was too late to think of marriage, so he dropped all farther pretensions to his mistress; nor would she after this unlucky adventure be induced to marry.

The son took the name of Gerard after his father, which in German signifies *amiable*, and (after the fashion

of the learned men of that age, who affected to give their names a Greek or Latin turn) his was turned into Erasmus, which in Greek has the same signification. He was chorister of the cathedral church of Utrecht till he was nine years old ; after which he was sent to Deventer to be instructed by the famous Alexander Hegius, a Westphalian. Under so able a master he proved an extraordinary proficient ; and it is remarkable that he had such a strength of memory as to be able to say all Terence and Horace by heart. He was now arrived to the thirteenth year of his age, and had been continually under the watchful eye of his mother, who died of the plague then raging at Deventer. The contagion daily increasing, and having swept away the family where he boarded, he was obliged to return home. His father Gerard was so concerned at his wife's death that he grew melancholy, and died soon after : neither of his parents being much above forty when they died.

Erasmus had three guardians assigned him, the chief of whom was Peter Winkel, schoolmaster of Goude; and the fortune left him was amply sufficient for his support, if his executors had faithfully discharged their trust. Although he was fit for the University, his guardians were averse to sending him there, as they designed him for a monastic life, and therefore removed him to Bois-le-duc, where, he says, he lost near three years, living in a Franciscan convent. The professor of humanity in this Convent, admiring his rising genius, daily importuned him to take the habit, and be of their order. Erasmus had no great inclination for the cloister ; not that he had the least dislike to the severities of a pious

life, but he could not reconcile himself to the monastic profession ; he therefore urged his rawness of age, and desired farther to consider better of the matter. The plague spreading in those parts, and he having struggled a long time with a quartan ague, obliged him to return home.

His guardians employed those about him to use all manner of arguments to prevail on him to enter the order of monk ; sometimes threatening, and at other times making use of flattery and fair speeches. When Winkel, his guardian, found him not to be moved from his resolution, he told him that he threw up his guardianship from that moment. Young Erasmus replied, that he took him at his word, since he was old enough now to look out for himself. When Winkel found that threats did not avail, he employed his brother, who was the other guardian, to see what he could effect by fair means. Thus he was surrounded by them and their agents on all sides.

By mere accident, Erasmus went to visit a religious house belonging to the same order, in Emaus or Steyn, near Goude, where he met with one Cornelius, who had been his companion at Deventer ; and though he had not himself taken the habit, he was perpetually preaching up the advantages of a religious life, as the convenience of noble libraries, the helps of learned conversation, retirement from the noise and folly of the world, and the like. Thus at last he was induced to pitch upon this Convent. Upon his admission they fed him with great promises, to engage him to take the holy cloth ; and though he found almost everything fall short of his

expectation, yet his necessities, and the usage he was threatened with if he abandoned their order, prevailed with him, after his year of probation, to profess himself a member of their fraternity. Not long after this, he had the honor to be known to Henry a Bergis, bishop of Cambray, who having some hopes of obtaining a cardinal's hat, wanted one perfectly master of Latin to solicit this affair for him ; for this purpose Erasmus was taken into the bishop's family, where he wore the habit of his order.

The bishop not succeeding in his expectation at Rome, proved fickle and wavering in his affection; therefore Erasmus prevailed with him to send him to Paris, to prosecute his studies in that famous university, with the promise of an annual allowance, which was never paid him. He was admitted into Montague College, but indisposition obliged him to return to the bishop, by whom he was honorably entertained.

Finding his health restored, he made a journey to Holland, intending to settle there, but was persuaded to go a second time to Paris ; where, having no patron to support him, he says, he rather made a shift to live, than he could be said to study.

He next visited England, where he was received with great respect ; and as appears by several of his letters, he honored it next to the place of his nativity. In a letter to Andrelinus, inviting him to England, he speaks highly of the beauty of the English ladies, and thus describes their innocent freedom : "When you come into a gentleman's house you are allowed the favor to salute them, and the same when you take leave." He was

particularly acquainted with Sir Thomas More, Colet, dean of Saint Paul's, Grocinus, Linacer, Latimer, and many of the most eminent men of that time; and passed some years at Cambridge. On his way to France he had the misfortune to be stripped of everything; but he did not revenge this injury by any unjust reflection on the country. Not meeting with the preferment he expected, he made a voyage to Italy, at that time little inferior to the Augustan age for learning. He took his doctor of divinity degree in the university of Turin; stayed about a year in Bologna; afterward went to Venice, and there published his book of Adages from the press of the famous Aldus. He removed to Padua, and last to Rome, where his fame had arrived long before him. Here he gained the friendship of all the considerable persons of the city, nor could he have failed to have made his fortune, had he not been prevailed upon by the great promises of his friends in England to return thither on Henry VIII coming to the crown. He was taken into favor by Warham, archbishop of Canterbury, who gave him the living of Aldington, in Kent; but whether Erasmus was wanting in making his court to Wolsey, or whether the cardinal viewed him with a jealous eye, because he was a favorite of Warham, between whom and Wolsey there was perpetual clashing, we know not; however, being disappointed, Erasmus went to Flanders, and by the interest of Chancellor Sylvagius, was made counsellor to Charles of Austria, afterward Charles V, emperor of Germany. He resided several years at Basil; but on the mass being abolished in that city by the Reformation, he retired to Friberg

in Alsace, where he lived seven years. Having been for a long time afflicted with the gout, he left Friberg, and returned to Basil. Here the gout soon left him, but he was seized by a dysentery, and after laboring a whole month under that disorder, died on the 22nd of July, 1536, in the house of Jerome Frobenius, son of John, the famous printer.

He was honorably interred, and the city of Basil still pays the highest respect to the memory of so great a man.

Erasmus was the most facetious man, and the greatest critic of his age. He carried on a reformation in learning at the same time he advanced that of religion ; and promoted a purity of style as well as simplicity of worship. This drew on him the hatred of the ecclesiastics, who were no less bigoted to their barbarisms in language and philosophy, than they were to their superstitious and gaudy ceremonies in religion ; they murdered him in their dull treatises, libeled him in their wretched sermons, and in their last and most effectual efforts of malice, they joined some of their own execrable stuff to his compositions ; of which he himself complains in a letter addressed to the divines of Louvain. He exposed with great freedom the vices and corruptions of his own church, yet never would be persuaded to leave her communion. The papal policy would never have suffered Erasmus to have taken so unbridled a range in the reproof and censure of her extravagancies, but under such circumstances, when the public attack of Luther imposed on her a prudential necessity of not disobliging her friends, that she might with more united strength

oppose the common enemy ; and patiently bore what at any other time she would have resented.

Perhaps no man has obliged the public with a greater number of useful volumes than our author ; though several have been attributed to him which he never wrote. His book of Colloquies has passed through more editions than any of his others. Moreri tells us a boseller in Paris sold twenty thousand copies of one edition.

ERASMVS

EPISTLE TO SIR THOMAS MORE.

IN my late travels from Italy into England, that I might not trifle away my time in the rehearsal of old wives' fables, I thought it more pertinent to employ my thoughts in reflecting upon some past studies, or calling to remembrance several of those highly learned, as well as smartly ingenious, friends I had here left behind, among whom you (dear Sir) were represented as the chief; whose memory, while absent at this distance, I respect with no less a complacency than I was wont while present to enjoy your more intimate conversation, which last afforded me the greatest satisfaction I could possibly hope for. Having therefore resolved to be a doing, and deeming that time improper for any serious concerns, I thought good to divert myself with drawing up a panegyric upon Folly. How! what maggot (say you) put this in your head? Why, the first hint, Sir, was your own surname of More, which comes as near the literal sound of the word,* as you yourself are distant from the signification of it, and that in all men's judgments is vastly wide. In the next place, I supposed that this kind of sporting wit would be by you more especially accepted of,—by you, Sir, that are wont with this sort of jocose raillery (such as, if I mistake not, is neither dull nor impertinent) to be mightily pleased, and in your ordinary converse to approve yourself a Democ-

* *Μωρία.*

ritus junior: for truly, as you do from a singular vein of wit very much dissent from the common herd of mankind; so, by an incredible affability and pliableness of temper, you have the art of suiting your humor with all sorts of companies. I hope therefore you will not only readily accept of this rude essay as a token from your friend, but take it under your more immediate protection, as being dedicated to you, and by that title adopted for yours, rather than to be fathered as my own. And it is a chance if there be wanting some quarrelsome persons that will show their teeth, and pretend these fooleries are either too buffoon-like for a grave divine, or too satirical for a meek christian, and so will exclaim against me as if I were vamping up some old farce, or acted anew the Lucian again with a peevish snarling at all things. But those who are offended at the lightness and pedantry of this subject, I would have them consider that I do not set myself for the first example of this kind, but that the same has been oft done by many considerable authors. For thus several ages since, Homer wrote of no more weighty a subject than of a war between the frogs and mice, Virgil of a gnat and a pudding-cake, and Ovid of a nut. Polycrates commended the cruelty of Busiris; and Isocrates, that corrects him for this, did as much for the injustice of Glaucus. Favorinus extolled Thersites, and wrote in praise of a quartan ague. Synesius pleaded in behalf of baldness; and Lucian defended a sipping fly. Seneca drollingly related the deifying of Claudius; Plutarch the dialogue betwixt Gryllus and Ulysses; Lucian and Apuleius the story of an ass; and somebody else records the last will of a hog,

of which St. Hierom makes mention. So that if they please, let themselves think the worst of me, and fancy to themselves that I was all this while a playing at push-pin, or riding astride on a hobby-horse. For how unjust is it, if when we allow different recreations to each particular course of life, we afford no diversion to studies; especially when trifles may be a whet to more serious thoughts, and comical matters may be so treated of, as that a reader of ordinary sense may possibly thence reap more advantage than from some more big and stately argument: as while one in a long-winded oration descants in commendation of rhetoric or philosophy, another in a fulsome harangue sets forth the praise of his nation, a third makes a zealous invitation to a holy war with the Turks, another confidently sets up for a fortune-teller, and a fifth states questions upon mere impertinences. But as nothing is more childish than to handle a serious subject in a loose, wanton style, so is there nothing more pleasant than to so treat of trifles, as to make them seem nothing less than what their name imports. As to what relates to myself, I must be forced to submit to the judgment of others; yet, except I am too partial to be a judge in my own case, I am apt to believe I have praised Folly in such a manner as not to have deserved the name of fool for my pains.

To reply now to the objection of satiricalness, wits have been always allowed this privilege, that they might be smart upon any transactions of life, if so be their liberty did not extend to railing; which makes me wonder at the tender-eared humor of this age, which will admit no address without the prefatory repetition of all formal

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titles ; nay, you may find some so preposterously devout, that they will sooner wink at the greatest affront against our Saviour, than be content that a prince, or a pope, should be nettled with the least joke or gird, especially in what relates to their ordinary customs. But he who so blames men's irregularities as to lash at no one particular person by name, does he (I say) seem to carp so properly as to teach and instruct? And if so, how am I concerned to make any farther excuse? Beside, he who in his strictures points indifferently at all, he seems not angry at one man, but at all vices.

Therefore, if any singly complain they are particularly reflected upon, they do but betray their own guilt, at least their cowardice. Saint Hierom dealt in the same argument at a much freer and sharper rate ; nay, and he did not sometimes refrain from naming the persons : whereas I have not only stifled the mentioning any one person, but have so tempered my style, as the ingenious reader will easily perceive I aimed at diversion rather than satire. Neither did I so far imitate Juvinal, as to rake into the sink of vices to procure a laughter, rather than create a hearty abhorrence. If there be any one that after all remains yet unsatisfied, let him at least consider that there may be good use made of being reprehended by Folly, which since we have feigned as speaking, we must keep up that character which is suitable to the person introduced.

But why do I trouble you, Sir, with this needless apology, you that are so peculiar a patron ; as, though the cause itself be none of the best, you can at least give it the best protection. Farewell.

ARGUMENT AND DESIGN OF THE FOLLOWING ORATION.

WHATE'ER the modern satyrs o' th' stage,
To jerk the failures of a sliding age,
Have lavishly expos'd to public view,
For a discharge to all from envy due,
Here in as lively colors naked lie,
With equal wit and more of modesty,
Those poets, with their free disclosing arts,
Strip vice so near to its uncomely parts,
Their libels prove but lessons, and they teach,
Those very crimes which they intend t' impeach:
While here so wholesome all, tho' sharp t' th' taste,
So briskly free, yet so resolv'dly chaste;
The virgin naked as her god of bows,
May read or hear when blood at highest flows;
Nor more expense of blushes thence arise,
Than while the lect'ring matron does advise
To guard her virtue, and her honor prize.
Satire and panegyric, distant be,
Yet jointly here they both in one agree.
The whole's a sacrifice of salt and fire;
So does the humor of the age require,
To chafe the touch, and so foment desire.
As doctrine-dangling preachers lull asleep
Their unattentive pent-up fold of sheep;
The opiated milk glues up the brain,

And th' babes of grace are in their cradles lain;
While mounted Andrews, bawdy, bold, and loud,
Like cocks, alarm and fright the drowsy crowd,
Whose ample ears are prick'd as bolt upright,
As sailing hairs are hoisted in a fright.
So does it fare with croaking spawns o' th' press,
The mould o' th' subject alters the success;
What's serious, like sleep, grants writs of ease,
Satire and ridicule can only please;
As if no other animals could gape,
But the biting-badger, or the snick'ring ape.
Folly by irony's commended here,
Sooth'd, that her weakness may the more appear.
Thus fools, who trick'd, in red and yellow shine,
Are made believe that they are wondrous fine,
When all's a plot t' expose them by design.
The largesses of Folly here are strown
Like pebbles, not to pick, but trample on.
Thus Spartans laid their drunken slaves before
The boys, to jostle, kick, and tumble o'er:
Not that the dry-lipp'd youngsters might combine
To taste and know the mystery of wine,
But wonder thus at men transformed to swine;
And th' power of such enchantment to escape,
Timely renounce the devil of the grape.
So here,
Though Folly speaker be, and argument,
Wit guides the tongue, wisdom's the Lecture meant.

ERASMUS IN PRAISE OF FOLLY.

An oration of feigned matter, spoken by FOLLY *in her own person.*

HOW slightly soever I am esteemed in the common vogue of the world, (for I well know how disingenuously Folly is decried, even by those who are themselves the greatest fools,) yet it is from my influence alone that the whole universe receives her ferment of mirth and jollity : of which this may be urged as a convincing argument, in that as soon as I appeared to speak before this numerous assembly, all their countenances were gilded over with a lively sparkling pleasantness : you soon welcomed me with so encouraging a look, you spurred me on with so cheerful a hum, that truly in all appearance, you seem now flushed with a good dose of reviving nectar, when as just before you sate drowsy and melancholy, as if you were lately come out of some hermit's cell.

But as it is usual, that as soon as the sun peeps from her eastern bed, and draws back the curtains of the darksome night ; or as when, after a hard winter, the restorative spring breathes a more enlivening air, nature forthwith changes her apparel, and all things seem to renew their age ; so at the first sight of me you all unmask, and appear in more lively colors. That

therefore which expert orators can scarce effect by all their little artifice of eloquence, to wit, securing the attention of their auditors to a composedness of thought, this a bare look from me has commanded. The reason why I appear in this odd kind of garb, you shall soon be informed of, if for so short a while you will have but the patience to lend me an ear ; yet not such a one as you are wont to hearken with to your reverend preachers, but as you listen withal to mountebanks, buffoons and merry-andrews ; in short, such as formerly were fastened to Midas, as a punishment for his affront to the god Pan.

For I am now in a humor to act awhile the sophist, yet not of that sort who undertake the drudgery of tyrannizing over school boys, and teach a more than womanish knack of brawling ; but in imitation of those ancient ones, who to avoid the scandalous epithet of wise, preferred this title of sophists ; the task of these was to celebrate the worth of gods and heroes. Prepare therefore to be entertained with a panegyric, yet not upon Hercules, Solon, or any other grandee, but on myself, that is, upon Folly.

And here I value not their censure that pretend it is foppish and affected for any person to praise himself: yet let it be as silly as they please, if they will but allow it needful : and indeed what is more befiting than that Folly should be the trumpet of her own praise, and dance after her own pipe? for who can set me forth better than myself? or who can pretend to be so well acquainted with my condition?

And yet farther, I may safely urge, that all this is no

Folly readily receives Attention.

more than the same with what is done by several seemingly great and wise men, who with a new-fashioned modesty employ some paltry orator or scribbling poet, whom they bribe to flatter them with some high-flown character, that shall consist of mere lies and shams ; and yet the persons thus extolled shall bristle up, and, peacock-like, bespread their plumes, while the impudent parasite magnifies the poor wretch to the skies, and proposes him as a complete pattern of all virtues, from each of which he is yet as far distant as heaven itself from hell : what is all this in the mean while, but the tricking up a daw in stolen feathers ; a laboring to change the black-a-moor's hue, and the drawing on a pigmy's frock over the shoulders of a giant.

Lastly, I verify the old observation, that allows him a right of praising himself, who has nobody else to do it for him : for really, I cannot but admire at that ingratitude, shall I term it, or blockishness of mankind, who when they all willingly pay to me their utmost devoir, and freely acknowledge their respective obligations ; that notwithstanding this, there should have been none so grateful or complaisant as to have bestowed on me a commendatory oration, especially when there have not been wanting such as at a great expense of sweat, and loss of sleep, have in elaborate speeches, given high encomiums to tyrants, agues, flies, baldness and such like trumperies.

I shall entertain you with a hasty and unpremeditated, but so much the more natural discourse. My venting it *ex tempore*, I would not have you think proceeds from any principles of vain glory by which ordinary orators

square their attempts, who (as it is easy to observe) when they are delivered of a speech that has been thirty years a conceiving, nay, perhaps at last none of their own, yet they will swear they wrote it in a great hurry, and upon very short warning : whereas the reason of my not being provided beforehand is only because it was always my humor constantly to speak that which lies uppermost. Next, let no one be so fond as to imagine, that I should so far stint my invention to the method of other pleaders, as first to define, and then divide my subject, *i.e.*, myself. For it is equally hazardous to attempt the crowding her within the narrow limits of a definition, whose nature is of so diffusive an extent, or to mangle and disjoin that, to the adoration whereof all nations unitedly concur. Beside, to what purpose is it to lay down a definition for a faint resemblance, and mere shadow of me, while appearing here personally, you may view me in a more certain light? and if your eyesight fail not, you may at first blush discern me to be her whom the Greeks term Μωρία, the Latins *stultitia.*

But why need I have been so impertinent as to have told you this, as if my very looks did not sufficiently betray what I am ; or supposing any be so credulous as to take me for some sage matron or goddess of wisdom, as if a single glance from me would not immediately correct their mistake, while my visage, the exact reflex of my soul, would supply and supersede the trouble of any other confessions ; for I appear always in my natural colors, and an unartificial dress, and never let my face pretend one thing, and my heart conceal another ; nay, and in all things I am so true to my principles, that I

The Physician.

cannot be so much as counterfeited, even by those who challenge the name of wits, yet indeed are no better than jackanapes tricked up in gawdy clothes, and asses strutting in lions' skins; and how cunningly soever they carry it, their long ears appear, and betray what they are. These in troth are very rude and disingenuous, for while they apparently belong to my party, yet among the vulgar they are so ashamed of my relation, as to cast it in others' dish for a shame and reproach: wherefore since they are so eager to be accounted wise, when in truth they are extremely silly, what, if to give them their due, I dub them with the title of wise fools: and herein they copy after the example of some modern orators, who swell to that proportion of conceitedness, as to vaunt themselves for so many giants of eloquence, if with a double-tongued fluency they can plead indifferently for either side, and deem it a very doughty exploit if they can but interlard a Latin sentence with some Greek word, which for seeming garnish they crowd in at a venture; and rather than be at a stand for some cramp words, they will furnish up a long scroll of old obsolete terms out of some musty author, and foist them in to amuse the reader with, that those who understand them may be tickled with the happiness of being acquainted with them: and those who understand them not, the less they know the more they may admire; whereas it has been always a custom to those of our side to contemn and undervalue whatever is strange and unusual, while those that are better conceited of themselves will nod and smile, and prick up their ears, that they may be thought easily to apprehend that, of which per-

haps they do not understand one word. And so much for this; pardon the digression, now I return.

Of my name I have informed you, Sirs; what additional epithet to give you I know not, except you will be content with that of most foolish; for under what more proper appellation can the goddess Folly greet her devotees? But since there are few acquainted with my family and origin, I will now give you some account of my extraction.

First then, my father was neither the chaos, nor hell, nor Saturn, nor Jupiter, nor any of those old, worn out, grandsire gods, but Plutus, the very same that, maugre Homer, Hesiod, nay, in spite of Jove himself, was the primary father of the universe; at whose beck alone, for all ages, religion and civil policy have been successively undermined and re-established—by whose powerful influence war, peace, empire, debates, justice, magistracy, marriage, leagues, compacts, laws, arts, (I have almost run myself out of breath,) but in a word, all affairs of church and state, and business of private concern, are severally ordered and administered; without whose assistance all the Poets' gang of deities, nay, I may be so bold as to say the very major-domos of heaven, would either dwindle into nothing, or at least be confined to their respective homes without any ceremonies of devotional address. Whoever he combats with as an enemy, nothing can be armor-proof against his assaults; and whosoever he sides with as a friend, may grapple at even hand with Jove, and all his bolts. Of such a father I may well brag; and he begot me, not of his brain, as Jupiter did the hag Pallas, but of a pretty young nymph,

The Harp and the Ass.

The Father of Folly.

The Mother of Folly.

The Wise Father and Foolish Son.

Jove and his Nurse.

famed for wit no less than beauty: and this feat was not done amidst the embraces of dull nauseous wedlock, but what gave a greater gust to the pleasure, it was done at a stolen bout, as we may modestly phrase it. But to prevent your mistaking me, I would have you understand that my father was not that Plutus in Aristophanes, old, dry, withered, sapless and blind ; but the same in his younger and brisker days, and when his veins were more impregnated, and the heat of his youth somewhat higher inflamed by a chirping cup of nectar, which for a whet to his lust he had just before drank very freely of at a merry-meeting of the gods. And now presuming you may be inquisitive after my birth-place (the quality of the place we are born in, being now looked upon as a main ingredient of gentility). I was born neither in the floating Delo's, nor on the frothy sea, nor in any of these privacies, where too forward mothers are wont to retire for an undiscovered delivery ; but in the fortune islands, where all things grow without the toil of husbandry, wherein there is no drudgery, no distempers, no old age, where in the fields grow no daffodills, mallows, onions, pease, beans, or such kind of trash, but there give equal divertisement to our sight and smelling, rue, all-heal, bugloss, marjoram, herb of life, roses, violets, hyacinths, and such like fragrances as perfume the gardens of Adonis. And being born amongst these delights, I did not, like other infants, come crying into the world, but perked up, and laughed immediately in my mother's face. And there is no reason I should envy Jove for having a she-goat for his nurse, since I was more creditably suckled by two jolly nymphs ; the name of the first

drunkenness, one of Bacchus's offspring, the other ignorance, the daughter of Pan ; both which you may here behold among several others of my train and attendants, whose particular names, if you would feign know, I will give you in short. This, who goes with a mincing gait, and holds up her head so high, is Self-Love. She that looks so spruce, and makes such a noise and bustle, is Flattery. That other, which sits hum-drum, as if she were half asleep, is called Forgetfulness. She that leans on her elbow, and sometimes yawningly stretches out her arms, is Laziness. This, that wears a plaited garland of flowers, and smells so perfumed, is Pleasure. The other, which appears in so smooth a skin, and pampered-up flesh, is Sensuality. She that stares so wildly, and rolls about her eyes, is Madness. As to those two gods whom you see playing among the lasses, the name of the one is Intemperance, the other Sound Sleep. By the help and service of this retinue I bring all things under the verge of my power, lording it over the greatest kings and potentates.

You have now heard of my descent, my education, and my attendance ; that I may not be taxed as presumptuous in borrowing the title of a goddess, I come now in the next place to acquaint you what obliging favors I everywhere bestow, and how largely my jurisdiction extends : for if, as one has ingenuously noted, to be a god is no other than to be a benefactor to mankind ; and they have been thought deservedly deified who have invented the use of wine, corn, or any other convenience for the well-being of mortals, why may not I justly bear the van among the whole troop of gods, who in all, and

The Birth of Folly.

King Solomon.

The Matrimonial Noose.

toward all, exert an unparalleled bounty and beneficence?

For instance, in the first place, what can be more dear and precious than life itself? and yet for this are none beholden, save to me alone.

For it is neither the spear of thoroughly-begotten Pallas, nor the buckler of cloud-gathering Jove, that multiplies and propagates mankind, but that prime father of the universe, who at a displeasing nod makes heaven itself to tremble, he (I say) must lay aside his frightful ensigns of majesty, and put away that grim aspect wherewith he makes the other gods to quake, and, stage player-like, must lay aside his usual character, if he would do that, the doing whereof he cannot refrain from, *i.e.*, getting of children. The next place to the gods is challenged by the Stoics; but give me one as stoical as ill-nature can make him, and if I do not prevail on him to part with his beard, that bush of wisdom, (though no other ornament than what nature in more ample manner has given to goats,) yet at least he shall lay by his gravity, smooth up his brow, relinquish his rigid tenets, and in despite of prejudice become sensible of some passion in wanton sport and dallying.

In a word, this dictator of wisdom shall be glad to take Folly for his diversion, if ever he would arrive to the honor of a father.

Add to this, what man would be so silly as to run his head into the collar of a matrimonial noose, if (as wise men are wont to do) he had before-hand duly considered the inconveniences of a wedded life?

Or indeed what woman would open her arms to receive the embraces of a husband, if she did but forecast the pangs of child-birth, and the plague of being a nurse?

Since, then, you owe your birth to the bride-bed, and (what was preparatory to that) the solemnizing of marriage to my waiting woman Madness, you cannot but acknowledge how much you are indebted to me.

Beside, those who had once dearly bought the experience of their folly, would never re-engage themselves in the same entanglement by a second match, if it were not occasioned by the forgetfulness of past dangers. And Venus herself (whatever Lucretius pretends to the contrary), cannot deny, but that without my assistance, her procreative power would prove weak and ineffectual.

It was from my sportive and tickling recreation that proceeded the old crabbed philosophers, and those who now supply their stead, the mortified monks and friars; as also kings, priests, and popes, nay, the whole tribe of poetic gods, who are at last grown so numerous, as in the camp of heaven (though ne'er so spacious), to jostle for elbow room.

But it is not sufficient to make it appear that I am the source and origin of all life, except that I likewise show that all the benefits of life are equally at my disposal. And what are they?

Why, can any one be said properly to live to whom pleasure is denied?

You will give me your assent; for there is none I

The Schoolmaster.

know among you so wise shall I say, or so silly, as to be of a contrary opinion.

The Stoics indeed contemn, and pretend to banish pleasure; but this is only a dissembling trick, and a putting the vulgar out of conceit with it, that they may more quietly engross it to themselves: but I dare them now to confess what one stage of life is not melancholy, dull, tiresome, tedious, and uneasy, unless we spice it with pleasure, that haut-gout of Folly. Of the truth whereof the never enough to be commended Sophocles is sufficient authority, who gives me the highest character in that sentence of his,

To know nothing is the sweetest life.

Yet abating from this, let us examine the case more narrowly. Who knows not that the first scene of infancy is far the most pleasant and delightsome? What then is it in children that makes us so kiss, hug, and play with them, and that the bloodiest enemy can scarce have the heart to hurt them; but their innocence and Folly, of which nature out of providence did purposely compound and blend their tender infancy, that by a frank return of pleasure they might make some sort of amends for their parents' trouble, and give in caution as it were for the discharge of a future education; the next advance from childhood is youth, and how favorably is this dealt with; how kind, courteous, and respectful are all to it? and how ready to become serviceable upon all occasions? And whence reaps it this happiness? Whence indeed, but from me only, by whose procurement it is furnished with little of wisdom, and so with the less of disquiet? And when once lads begin to grow up, and attempt to

write man, their prettiness does then soon decay, their briskness flags, their humors stagnate, their jollity ceases, and their blood grows cold ; and the farther they proceed in years, the more they grow backward in the enjoyment of themselves, till waspish old age comes on, a burden to itself as well as others, and that so heavy and oppressive, as none would bear the weight of, unless out of pity to their sufferings. I again intervene, and lend a helping-hand, assisting them at a dead lift, in the same method the poets feign their gods to succor dying men, by transforming them into new creatures, which I do by bringing them back, after they have one foot in the grave, to their infancy again ; so as there is a great deal of truth couched in that old proverb, *Once an old man and twice a child.*

Now if any one be curious to understand what course I take to effect this alteration, my method is this : I bring them to my well of forgetfulness, (the fountain whereof is in the Fortunate Islands, and the river Lethe in hell but a small stream of it), and when they have there filled their bellies full, and washed down care, by the virtue and operation whereof they become young again. Ay, but (say you) they merely dote, and play the fool : why yes, this is what I mean by growing young again : for what else is it to be a child than to be a fool and an idiot? It is the being such that makes that age so acceptable : for who does not esteem it somewhat ominous to see a boy endowed with the discretion of a man, and therefore for the curbing of too forward parts we have a disparaging proverb, *Soon ripe, soon rotten?* And farther, who would keep company or have

Suspicion.

any thing to do with such an old blade, as, after the wear and harrowing of so many years should yet continue of as clear a head and sound a judgment as he had at any time been in his middle-age ; and therefore it is great kindness of me that old men grow fools, since it is hereby only that they are freed from such vexations as would torment them if they were more wise : they can drink briskly, bear up stoutly, and lightly pass over such infirmities, as a far stronger constitution could scarce master. Sometimes, with the old fellow in Plautus, they are brought back to their horn-book again, to learn to spell their fortune in love. Most wretched would they needs be if they had but wit enough to be sensible of their hard condition ; but by my assistance, they carry off all well, and to their respective friends approve themselves good, sociable, jolly companions. Thus Homer makes aged Nestor famed for a smooth oily-tongued orator, while the delivery of Achilles was but rough, harsh, and hesitant; and the same poet elsewhere tells us of old men that sate on the walls, and spake with a great deal of flourish and elegance. And in this point indeed they surpass and outgo children, who are pretty forward in a softly, innocent prattle, but otherwise are too much tongue-tied, and want the other's most acceptable embellishment of a perpetual talkativeness. Add to this, that old men love to be playing with children, and children delight as much in them, to verify the proverb, that *Birds of a feather flock together.* And indeed what difference can be discerned between them, but that the one is more furrowed with wrinkles, and has seen a little more of the world than the other? For

otherwise their whitish hair, their want of teeth, their smallness of stature, their milk diet, their bald crowns, their prattling, their playing, their short memory, their heedlessness, and all their other endowments, exactly agree; and the more they advance in years, the nearer they come back to their cradle, till like children indeed, at last they depart the world, without any remorse at the loss of life, or sense of the pangs of death.

And now let any one compare the excellency of my metamorphosing power to that which Ovid attributes to the gods; their strange feats in some drunken passions we will omit for their credit sake, and instance only in such persons as they pretend great kindness for; these they transformed into trees, birds, insects, and sometimes serpents; but alas, their very change into somewhat else argues the destruction of what they were before; whereas I can restore the same numerical man to his pristine state of youth, health and strength; yea, what is more, if men would but so far consult their own interest, as to discard all thoughts of wisdom, and entirely resign themselves to my guidance and conduct, old age should be a paradox, and each man's years a perpetual spring. For look how your hard plodding students, by a close sedentary confinement to their books, grow mopish, pale, and meagre, as if by a continual wrack of brains, and torture of invention, their veins were pumped dry, and their whole body squeezed sapless; whereas my followers are smooth, plump, and bucksome, and altogether as lusty as so many bacon-hogs, or sucking calves; never in their career of pleasure to be arrested with old age, if they could but keep them-

Scribes and Pharisees.

Momos Thrust out of Heaven.

selves untainted from the contagiousness of wisdom, with the leprosy whereof, if at any time they are infected, it is only for prevention, lest they should otherwise have been too happy.

For a more ample confirmation of the truth of what foregoes, it is on all sides confessed, that Folly is the best preservative of youth, and the most effectual antidote against age, and it is a never-failing observation made of the people of Brabant, that, contrary to the proverb of *Older and wiser*, the more ancient they grow, the more foolish they are ; and there is not any one country, whose inhabitants enjoy themselves better, and rub through the world with more ease and quiet. To these are nearly related, as well by affinity of customs as of neighborhood, my friends, the Hollanders. Mine, I may well call them, for they stick so close and lovingly to me, that they are styled fools to a proverb, and yet scorn to be ashamed of their name. Well, let fond mortals go now in a needless quest of some enchanted fountain, for a restorative of age, whereas the accurate performance of this feat lies only within the ability of my art and skill.

It is I only who have the receipt of making that liquor wherewith Memnon's daughter lengthened out her grandfather's declining days. It is I that am that Venus, who so far restored the languishing Phaon, as to make Sappho fall deeply in love with his beauty. Mine are those herbs, mine those charms, that not only lure back swift time, when past and gone, but what is more to be admired, clip its wings, and prevent all further flight. So then, if you will all agree to my verdict, that nothing is more desirable than the being young, nor anything

more dreaded than unavoidable old age, you must needs acknowledge it as an indisputable obligation from me, for fencing off the one, and perpetuating the other.

But why should I confine my discourse to the narrow subject of mankind only? View the whole mythological heaven itself, and then tell me which one of that divine tribe would not be mean and dispicable, if my name did not lend him some respect and authority. Why is Bacchus always painted as a young man, but only because he is freakish, drunk, and mad; and spending his time in toping, dancing, masking, and reveling, seems to have nothing in the least to do with wisdom? Nay, so far is he from the affectation of being accounted wise, that he is content that all the rights of devotion which are paid unto him should consist of apishness and drollery. Farther, what scoffs and jeers did the old comedians throw upon him? *O swinish god*, say they, *that smells of the sty he was reared in*, and so on. But prithee, who in this case, always merry, youthful, soaked in wine and drowned in pleasure, who, I say, in such a case, would change conditions, either with the lofty menace-looking Jove, the grave, yet timorous Pan, the stately Pallas, or indeed any other one of heaven's landlords? Why is Cupid feigned as a boy, but only because he is an under-witted whipster, that neither acts nor thinks any thing with discretion? Why is Venus adored for the mirror of beauty, but only because she and I claim kindred, she being of the same complexion with my father Plutus, and therefore called by Homer the Golden Goddess? Beside, she imitates me in being always a laughing, if either we believe the poets, or their

More Votaries of Folly.

near kinsman the painters,—the first mentioning, the other drawing her constantly in that posture. Add farther—to what deity did the Romans pay a more ceremonial respect than to Flora, that bawd of obscenity? And if any one search the poets for an historical account of the gods, he shall find them all famous for lewd pranks and debaucheries. It is needless to insist upon the miscarriages of others, when the lecherous intrigues of Jove himself are so notorious, and when the pretendedly chaste Diana so oft uncloaked her modesty to run a hunting after her beloved Endimion. But I will say no more, for I had rather they should be told of their faults by Momus, who was want formerly to sting them with some close reflections, till nettled by his abusive raillery, they kicked him out of heaven for his sauciness of daring to reprove such as were beyond correction; and now in his banishment from heaven he finds but cold entertainment here on earth, nay, is denied all admittance into the court of princes, where notwithstanding my handmaid Flattery finds a most encouraging welcome: but this petulent monitor being thrust out of doors, the gods can now more freely rant and revel, and take their whole swing of pleasure. Now the beastly Priappus may recreate himself without contradiction in lust and filthiness; now the sly Mercury may, without discovery, go on in his thieveries, and nimble-fingered juggles; the sooty Vulcan may now renew his wonted custom of making the other gods laugh by his hopping so limpingly, and coming off with so many dry jokes and biting repartees. Silenus, the old doting lover, to show his activity, may now dance a frisking jig, and the

nymphs be at the same sport quite naked. The goatish satyrs may make up a merry ball, and Pan, the blind harper, may put up his bagpipes and sing bawdy catches, to which the gods, especially when they are almost drunk, shall give a most profound attention. But why should I any farther rip open and expose the weakness of the gods, a weakness so childish and absurd, that no man can at the same time keep his countenance and make a relation of it? Now therefore, like Homer's wandering muse, I will take my leave of heaven, and come down again here below, where we shall find nothing happy, nay, nothing tolerable, without my presence and assistance. And in the first place consider how providently nature has taken care that in all her works there should be some piquant smack and relish of Folly: for since the Stoics define wisdom to be conducted by reason, and folly nothing else but the being hurried by passion, lest our life should otherwise have been too dull and inactive, that creator, who out of clay first tempered and made us up, put into the composition of our humanity more than a pound of passions to an ounce of reason; and reason he confined within the narrow cells of the brain, whereas he left passions the whole body to range in.

Farther, he set up two sturdy champions to stand perpetually on guard, that reason might make no assault, surprise, nor inroad ;—anger, which keeps its station in the fortress of the heart ; and lust, which like the signs Virgo and Scorpio, rules the appetites and passions.

Against the forces of these two warriors how unable is reason to bear up and withstand, every day's experience

Silenus, Pan, and the Satyr.

doth abundantly witness ; while let reason be never so importunate in urging and reinforcing her admonitions to virtue, yet the passions bear all before them, and by the least offer of curb or restraint grow but more imperious, till reason itself, for quietness sake, is forced to desist from all further remonstrance.

But because it seemed expedient that man, who was born for the transaction of business, should have so much wisdom as should fit and capacitate him for the discharge of his duty herein, and yet lest such a measure as is requisite for this purpose might prove too dangerous and fatal, I was advised with for an antidote, who prescribed this infallible receipt of taking a wife, a creature so harmless and silly, and yet so useful and convenient, as might mollify and make pliable the stiffness and morose humor of man. Now that which made Plato doubt under what genus to rank woman, whether among brutes or rational creatures, was only meant to denote the extreme stupidness and Folly of that sex, a sex so unalterably simple, that for any of them to thrust forward, and reach at the name of wise, is but to make themselves the more remarkable fools, such an endeavor, being but a swimming against the stream, nay, the turning the course of nature, the bare attempting whereof is as extravagant as the effecting of it is impossible : for as it is a trite proverb, *That an ape will be an ape, though clad in purple :* so a woman will be a woman, *i. e.*, a fool, whatever disguise she takes up. And yet there is no reason woman should take it amiss to be thus charged ; for if they do but rightly consider, they will find it is to Folly they are beholden for those endowments wherein they so far sur-

pass and excel man; as first, for their unparalleled beauty, by the charm whereof they tyrannize over the greatest tyrants ; for what is it but too great a portion of wisdom that makes men so tawny and thick-skinned, so rough and prickly-bearded, like an emblem of winter or old age, while women have such dainty smooth cheeks, such a low, gentle voice, and so pure a complexion, as if nature had drawn them for a standing pattern of all symmetry and comeliness? Beside, what greater or juster aim and ambition have they than to please their husbands? In order whereunto they garnish themselves with paint, washes, curls, perfumes, and all other mysteries of ornament ; yet after all they become acceptable to them only for their Folly. Wives are always allowed their humor, yet it is only in exchange for titillation and pleasure, which indeed are but other names for Folly, as none can deny, who consider how a man must hug, and dandle, and caress, and play a hundred little tricks to please, interest and amuse his mistress.

But now some blood-chilled old men, that are more for wine than wenching, will pretend, that in their opinion the greatest happiness consists in feasting and drinking. Grant it be so ; yet certainly in the most luxurious entertainments it is Folly must give the sauce and relish to the daintiest cates and delicacies ; so that if there be not one of the guests naturally fool enough to be played upon by the rest, they must procure some comical buffoon, that by his jokes, and flouts, and blunders, shall make the whole company split themselves with laughing : for to what purpose were it to be stuffed and crammed with so many dainty bits, savory dishes, and

Youth and Old Age—the Matrimonial Chain.

The Logician.

toothsome rarities, if after all this epicurism of the belly, the eyes, the ears and the whole mind of man, were not as well fostered and relieved with laughing, jesting, and such like divertisements, which like second courses serve for the promoting of digestion? And as to all those shooing horns of drunkenness, the keeping every one his man, the throwing hey-jinks, the filling of bumpers, the drinking two in a hand, the beginning of mistress' healths ; and then the roaring out of drunken catches, the calling in a fiddler, the leading out every one his lady to dance, and such like riotous pastimes, these were not taught or dictated by any of the wise men of Greece, but of Gotham rather, being my invention, and by me prescribed as the best preservative of health: each of which, the more ridiculous it is, the more welcome it finds. And indeed, to jog sleepingly through the world, in a dumpish melancholy posture, cannot properly be said to live, but to be wound up as it were in a winding-sheet before we are dead, and so to be shuffled quick into a grave, and buried alive.

But there are yet others perhaps that have no gust in this sort of pleasure, but place their greatest content in the enjoyment of friends, telling us that true friendship is to be preferred before all other acquirements; that it is a thing so useful and necessary, as the very elements, which could not long subsist without a natural combination ; so pleasant that it affords as warm an influence as the sun itself ; so honest (if honesty in this case deserve any consideration), that the very philosophers have not hesitated to place this as one among the rest of their different sentiments of the chiefest good. But what if I

make it appear that I also am the main spring and original of this endearment? Yes, I can easily demonstrate it, and that not by crabbed syllogisms, or a crooked and unintelligible way of arguing, but can make it (as the proverb goes) *As plain as the nose on your face.* Well then, to scratch and curry one another, to wink at a friend's faults ; nay, to cry up some failings as virtuous and commendable, is not this the next door to the being a fool? When one looking steadfastly in his mistress's face, admires a mole as much as a beauty spot ; when another swears his lady's stinking breath is a most redolent perfume ; and at another time the fond parent hugs the squint-eyed child, and pretends it is rather a becoming glance and winning aspect than any blemish of the eye-sight,—what is all this but the very height of Folly? Folly, I say, that both makes friends and keeps them so.

I speak of mortal men only, among whom there are none but have some small faults ; he is most happy that has fewest. If we pass to the gods, we shall find that they have so much of wisdom, that they have very little of friendship ; nay, nothing of that which is true and hearty.

The reason why men make a greater improvement in this virtue, is only because they are more credulous and easy natured ; for friends must be of the same humor and inclinations too, or else the league of amity, though made with never so many protestations, will soon be broken. Thus grave and morose men seldom prove fast friends ; they are too captious and consorious, and will not bear with one another's infirmities ; they are as eagle-sighted as may be in the espial of others' faults,

The Plague of being a Nurse.

while they wink upon themselves, and never mind the beam in their own eyes. In short, man being by nature so prone to frailties, so humorsome and cross-grained, and guilty of so many slips and miscarriages, there could be no firm friendship contracted, except there be such an allowance made for each other's defaults which the Greeks term Εὐήθεια, and which we may construe good nature, which is but another word for Folly. And what? Is not Cupid, that first father of all relation, is not he stark blind, and that as he cannot himself distinguish between colors, so he would make us as mope-eyed in judging falsely of all love concerns, and wheedle us into thinking that we are always in the right? Thus every Jack sticks to his own Jill ; every tinker esteems his own trull ; and the hob-nailed suitor prefers Joan, the milk-maid, before any of my lady's daughters. These things are true, and are ordinarily laughed at, and yet, however ridiculous they seem, it is hence only that all societies receive their cement and consolidation.

The same which has been said of friendship is much more applicable to a state of marriage, which is but the highest advance and improvement of friendship in the closest bond of union. Good God! What frequent divorces or worse mischief would oft sadly happen, were it not that man and wife were so discreet as to pass over light occasions of quarrel with laughing, jesting, dissembling, and such like playing the fool? Nay, how few matches would go forward, if the hasty lover did but first know how many little tricks of lust and wantonness (and perhaps more gross failings) his coy and seemingly bashful mistress had oft been guilty of? And how few

marriages, when consummated, would continue happy, if the husband were not either sottishly insensible of, or did not purposely wink at and pass over the lightness and forwardness of his good-natured wife? This peace and quietness is owing to my management, for there would otherwise be continual jars, and broils, and mad doings, if want of wit only did not at the same time make a contented cuckold and a still house. If the cuckoo sings at the back door, the unthinking cornute takes no notice of the unlucky omen, of others' eggs being laid in his own nest, but laughs it over, kisses his dear spouse, and all is well.

And indeed, it is much better patiently to be such a henpecked frigot, than always to be wracked and tortured with the grating surmises of suspicion and jealousy. In fine, there is not one society, nor one relation men stand in, that would be comfortable, or indeed tolerable, without my assistance. There could be no right understanding betwixt prince and people, master and servant, tutor and pupil, friend and friend, man and wife, buyer and seller, or any persons however otherwise related, if they did not cowardly put up with small abuses, sneakingly cringe and submit, or after all fawningly caress and flatter each other.

This you will say is much, but you shall yet hear what is more: tell me then, can any one love another that first hates himself? Is it likely any one should agree with a friend that has first fallen out with his own judgment? Or is it probable he should be any way pleasing to another, who is a perpetual plague and trouble to himself? This is such a paradox that none

can be so mad as to maintain. Well, but if I am excluded and barred out, every man would be so far from being able to bear with others, that he would be burthensome to himself, and consequently incapable of any ease or satisfaction. Nature, that toward some of her products plays the step-mother rather than the indulgent parent, has endowed some men with that unhappy peevishness of disposition, as to nauseate and dislike whatever is their own, and much admire what belongs to other persons, so as they cannot in any wise enjoy what their birth or fortunes have bestowed upon them : for what grace is there in the greatest beauty, if it be always clouded with frowns and sullenness ? or what vigor in youth, if it be harassed with a pettish, dogged, waspish, ill humor ? None, whatever. Nor, indeed, can there be any creditable acquirement of ourselves in any one station of life, but we should sink without rescue into misery and despair, if we were not buoyed up and supported by self-love, which is but the elder sister (as it were) of Folly, and her own constant friend and assistant. For what is or can be more silly than to be lovers and admirers of ourselves ? And yet, if it were not so, there would be no relish to any of our words or actions. Take away this one attribute of a fool, and the orator shall become as dumb and silent as the rostrum he stands on ; the musician shall hang up his untouched instruments on the wall ; the greatest actors shall be hissed off the stage; the poet shall be burlesqued with his own doggerel rhymes ; the painter shall himself vanish into an imaginary landscape ; and the physician shall want food more than his patients do physic. In short, without self-love,

instead of beautiful, you shall think yourself an old beldam of fourscore; instead of youthful, you shall seem just dropping into the grave; instead of eloquent, a mere stammerer; and in lieu of being gentle and complaisant, you shall appear like a downright country clown; it being so necessary that every one should think well of themselves before they can expect the good opinion of others.

Finally, when it is the main and essential part of happiness to desire to be no other than what we already are, this expedient is again wholly owing to self-love, which so flushes men with a good conceit of their own, that no one repents of his shape, of his wit, of his education, or of his country; thus the dirty, half drowned Hollander would not remove into the pleasant plains of Italy, the rude Thracian would not change his boggy soil for the best location in Athens, nor the brutish Scythian quit his thorny deserts to become an inhabitant of the Fortunate Islands. And, oh! the wonderful contrivances of nature, which has ordered all things in so even a method that wherever she has been less bountiful in her gifts, there she makes it up with a larger dose of self-love, which supplies the former defects, and makes all equal.

To enlarge farther, I may well presume to aver, that there are no considerable exploits performed, no useful arts invented, but what I am the respective author and manager of: as first, what is more lofty and heroical than war? and yet, what is more foolish than for some petty trivial affront, to take such a revenge as both sides shall be sure to be losers, and where the quarrel must be decided at the price of so many limbs and lives? And

The Fool in the Family.

when they come to an engagement, what service can be done by such pale-faced students, as by drudging at the oars of wisdom, have spent all their strength and activity? No, the only use is of blunt sturdy fellows that have little of wit, and so the more of resolution ; except you would make a soldier of such another Demosthenes as threw down his arms when he came within sight of the enemy, and lost that credit in the camp which he gained in the pulpit. But counsel, deliberation, and advice, say you, are very necessary for the management of war : very true, but not such counsel as shall be prescribed by the strict rules of wisdom and justice ; for a battle shall be more successfully fought by serving-men, porters, bailiffs, padders, rogues, gaol-birds, and such like tag-rags of mankind, than by the most accomplished philosophers ; which last, how unhappy they are in the management of such concerns, Socrates, (by the oracle adjudged to be the wisest of mortals), is a notable example ; who when he appeared in the attempt of some public performance before the people, he faltered in the first onset, and could never recover himself, but was hooted and hissed home again ; yet this philosopher was the less a fool, for refusing the appellation of wise, and not accepting the oracle's compliment ; as also for advising that no philosophers should have any hand in the government of the commonwealth ; he should have likewise, at the same time, added, they should be banished all human society. And what made this great man poison himself to prevent the malice of his accusers? What made him the instrument of his own death, but only his excessiveness of wisdom? whereby, while he was searching into

the nature of clouds, while he was plodding and contemplating upon ideas, while he was exercising his geometry upon the measure of a flea, and diving into the recesses of nature, for an account how little insects, when they were so small could make so great a buzz and hum: while he was intent upon these fooleries he minded nothing of the world, or its ordinary concerns.

Next to Socrates comes his scholar Plato, a famous orator indeed, that could be so abashed out of countenance by an illiterate rabble, as to demur, and hawk, and hesitate, before he could get to the end of one short sentence. Theophrastus was such another coward, who beginning to make an oration, was presently struck down with fear, as if he had seen some ghost or hobgoblin. Isocrates was so bashful and timorous, that though he taught rhetoric, yet he could never have the confidence to speak in public. Cicero, the master of Roman eloquence, was wont to begin his speeches with a low, quivering voice, just like a school-boy, afraid of not saying his lesson perfect enough to escape whipping: and yet Fabius commends this property of Tully as an argument of a considerate orator, sensible of the difficulty of acquitting himself with credit: but what hereby does he do more than plainly confess that wisdom is but rub and impediment to the well management of any affair? How would these heroes crouch, and shrink into nothing, at the sight of drawn swords, that are thus quashed and stunned at the delivery of bare words?

Now, then, let Plato's fine sentence be cried up, that "happy are those commonwealths where either philosophers are elected kings, or kings turn philosophers."

Personifying a Prince.

Alas, this is so far from being true, that if we consult all historians for an account of past ages, we shall find no princes more weak, nor any people more slavish and wretched, than where the administration of affairs fell on the shoulders of some learned bookish governor. Of the truth whereof, the two Catos are exemplary instances: the first of which embroiled the city, and tired out the senate by his tedious harangues of defending himself and accusing others; the younger was the unhappy occasion of the loss of the peoples' liberty, while by improper methods he pretended to maintain it. To these may be added Brutus, Cassius, the two Gracchi, and Cicero himself, who was no less fatal to Rome, than his parallel Demosthenes was to Athens: as likewise Marcus Antoninus, whom we may allow to have been a good emperor, yet the less such for his having been a philosopher; and certainly he did not do half the kindness to his empire by his own prudent management of affairs, as he did mischief by leaving such a degenerate successor as his son Commodus proved to be; but it is a common observation, that *A wise father has many times a foolish son*, nature so contriving it, lest the taint of wisdom, like hereditary distempers, should otherwise descend by propagation. Thus Tully's son Marcus, though bred at Athens, proved but a dull, insipid soul; and Socrates, his children had (as one ingeniously expresses it) "more of the mother than the father," a phrase for their being fools.

However, it were the more excusable, though wise men are so awkward and unhandy in the ordering of public affairs, if they were not so bad, or worse in the

management of their ordinary and domestic concerns ; but alas, here they have much to seek : for place a formal wise man at a feast, and he shall, either by his morose silence put the whole table out of humor, or by his frivolous questions disoblige and tire out all that sit near him. Call him out to dance, and he shall move no more nimbly than a camel ; invite him to any public performance, and by his very looks he shall damp the mirth of all the spectators, and at last be forced, like Cato, to leave the theatre, because he could not unstarch his gravity, and put on a more pleasant countenance. If he engage in any discourse, he either breaks off abruptly, or tires out the patience of the whole company if he goes on. If he have any contract, sale, or purchase to make, or any other worldly business to transact, he behaves himself more like a senseless stock than a rational man ; so as he can be of no use nor advantage to himself, to his friends, or to his country ; because he knows nothing how the world goes, and is wholly unacquainted with the humor of the vulgar, who cannot but hate a person so disagreeing in temper from themselves.

And indeed the whole proceedings of the world are nothing but one continued scene of Folly, all the actors being equally fools and madmen ; and therefore if any be so pragmatically wise as to be singular, he must even turn a second Timon, or man-hater, and by retiring into some unfrequented desert, become a recluse from all mankind.

But to return to what I first proposed, what was it in the infancy of the world that made men, naturally savage, unite into civil societies, but only flattery, one of

my chiefest virtues? For there is nothing else meant by the fables of Amphion and Orpheus with their harps; the first making the stones jump into a well-built wall, the other inducing the trees to pull their legs out of the ground, and dance the morrice after him.

What was it that quieted and appeased the Roman people, when they broke out into a riot for the redress of grievances? Was it any formal starched oration? No, alas, it was only a silly, ridiculous story, told by Menenius Agrippa, how the other members of the body quarreled with the belly, resolving no longer to remain her drudging caterers, till by the penance they thought thus in revenge to impose, they soon found their own strength so far diminished that, realizing at the cost of experience their mistake, they willingly returned to their respective duties.

Thus when the rabble of Athens murmured at the exaction of the magistrates, Themistocles satisfied them with such another tale of the fox and the hedge-hog; the first whereof being stuck fast in a miry bog, the flies came swarming about him, and almost sucked out all his blood, the latter officiously offered his services to drive them away; "no," says the fox, "if these which are almost glutted be frighted off, there will come another hungry set that will be ten times more greedy and devouring:" the moral of this he thought applicable to the people, who if they had such magistrates removed as they complained of for extortion, yet their successors would probably be worse.

With what higher advances of policy could Sertorius have kept the barbarians so well in awe, as by a white

hart, which he pretended was presented to him by Diana, and brought him intelligence of all his enemies' designs? What was Lycurgus's grand argument for demonstrating the force of education, but only by bringing out two whelps of the same bitch, differently brought up, and placing before them a dish of food and a live hare; the one that had been bred to hunting, ran after the game, while the other, whose kennel had been a kitchen, presently fell a licking the platter.

Thus the before-mentioned Sertorius made his soldiers sensible that wit and contrivance would do more than bare strength, by setting a couple of men to the plucking off the hair from two horses' tails; the first, pulling at all in one handful, tugged in vain; while the other, though much the weaker, by snatching off the hairs one by one, soon performed his appointed task.

Instances of like nature are Minos and king Numa, both of whom fooled the people into obedience by a mere cheat and juggle; the first by pretending that he was advised by Jupiter, the latter by making the vulgar believe that he had the goddess Ægeria to assist him in all debates and transactions. And indeed it is by such wheedles that the common people are best gulled and imposed upon.

For farther, what city would ever submit to the rigorous laws of Plato, to the severe injunctions of Aristotle, or the more impracticable tenets of Socrates? No, these would have been too galling, there not being allowance enough made for the infirmities of the people.

To pass to another head, what was it made the Decii so forward to offer themselves up as a sacrifice for an

The Demonstration of Sertorius.

atonement to the angry gods, to rescue and stipulate for their indebted country? What made Curtius, on a like occasion, so desperately to throw away his life, but only vainglory, that is condemned, and unanimously voted for a main branch of folly by all wise men? What is more unreasonable and foppish (say they) than for any man, out of ambition to some office, to bow, to scrape and cringe to the gaping rabble, to purchase their favor by bribes and donatives, to have their names cried up in the streets, to be carried about as it were for a fine sight upon the shoulders of the crowd, to have their effigies carved in brass, and put up in the market place for a monument of their popularity?

Add to this, the affectation of new titles and distinctive badges of honor; nay, the very deifying of such as were the most bloody tyrants. These are so extremely ridiculous, that there is need of more than one Democritus to laugh at them. And yet hence only have been occasioned those memorable achievements of heroes, that have so much employed the pens of many laborious writers.

It is Folly that in a varied dress, governs cities, appoints magistrates, and supports judicatures; and, in short, makes the whole course of man's life a mere children's play and worse than push-pin diversion.

The invention of all arts and sciences are likewise owing to the same cause: for what sedentary, thoughtful men would have beat their brains in the search of new and unheard of mysteries, if not urged on by the bubbling hopes of credit and reputation? They think a little glittering flash of vainglory is a sufficient reward

for all their sweat and toil, and tedious drudgery, while they that are supposedly more foolish, reap advantage of the others' labors.

And now since I have made good my title to valor and industry, what if I challenge an equal share of wisdom?

How! you will say, this is absurd and contradictory; the east and west may as soon shake hands as Folly and Wisdom be reconciled. Well, but have a little patience and I will warrant you I will make out my claim. First then, if wisdom (as must be confessed) is no more than a readiness of doing good, and an expeditious method of becoming serviceable to the world, to whom does this virtue more properly belong? To the wise man, who partly out of modesty, partly out of cowardice, can proceed resolutely in no attempt; or to the fool, that goes hand over head, leaps before he looks, and so ventures through the most hazardous undertaking without any sense or prospect of danger? In the undertaking of any enterprise the wise man shall run to consult with his books, and daze himself with poring over musty authors, whilst the dispatchful fool shall rush blindly on, and have done the business, while the other is thinking of it. For the two greatest lets and impediments to the issue of any performance are modesty, which casts a mist before men's eyes, and fear, which makes them shrink back, and recede from any proposal: both these are banished by Folly, and in their stead such a habit of fool-hardiness introduced, as mightily contributes to the success of all enterprises. Farther, if you will have wisdom taken in the other sense, of being a right judg-

ment of things, you shall see how short wise men fall of it in this acceptation.

First, then, it is certain that all things, like so many Janus's, carry a double face, or rather bear a false aspect, most things being really in themselves far different from what they are in appearance to others : so that which at first blush proves alive, is in truth dead ; and that again, which appears as dead, at a nearer view proves to be alive ; beautiful seems ugly, wealthy poor, scandalous is thought creditable, prosperous passes for unlucky, friendly for what is most opposite, and innocent for what is hurtful and pernicious. In short, if we change the tables, all things are found placed in a quite different posture from what just before they appeared to stand in.

If this seem too darkly and unintelligibly expressed, I will explain it by the familiar instance of some great king or prince, whom every one shall suppose to swim in a luxury of wealth, and to be a powerful lord and master ; when, alas, on the one hand he has poverty of spirit enough to make him a mere beggar, and on the other side he is worse than a galley-slave to his own lusts and passions.

If I had a mind further to expatiate, I could enlarge upon several instances of like nature, but this one may at present suffice.

Well, but what is the meaning (will some say) of all this? Why, observe the application. If any one in a play-house be so impertinent and rude as to rifle the actors of their borrowed clothes, make them lay down the character assumed, and force them to return to their naked selves, would not such a one wholly discompose

and spoil the entertainment? And would he not deserve to be hissed and thrown stones at till the pragmatical fool could learn better manners? For by such a disturbance the whole scene will be altered: such as acted the men will perhaps appear to be women: he that was dressed up for a young brisk lover, will be found a rough old fellow; and he that represented a king, will remain but a mean ordinary serving-man. The laying things thus open is marring all the sport, which consists only in counterfeit and disguise.

Now the world is nothing else but such another comedy, where every one in the tire-room is first habited suitably to the part he is to act; and as it is successively their turn, out they come on the stage, where he that now personates a prince, shall in another part of the same play alter his dress, and become a beggar, all things being in a mask and particular disguise, or otherwise the play could never be presented.

Now, if there should arise any starched, formal don, that would point at the several actors, and tell how this, that seems a petty god, is indeed worse than a brute, being made captive to the tyranny of passion; that the other, who bears the character of a king, is indeed the most slavish of serving-men, in being subject to the mastership of lust and sensuality; that a third, who vaunts so much of his pedigree, is no better than a bastard for degenerating from virtue, which ought to be of greatest consideration in heraldry, and so shall go on in exposing all the rest; would not any one think such a person quite frantic, and ripe for Bedlam?

For as nothing is more silly than preposterous wisdom,

Fools have the Privilege of Speaking the Truth.

so is there nothing more indiscreet than an unreasonable reproof. And therefore he is to be hooted out of all society that will not be pliable, conformable, and willing to suit his humor with other men's, remembering the law of clubs and meetings, that he who will not do as the rest must get him out of the company.

And it is certainly one great degree of wisdom for every one to consider that he is but a man, and therefore he should not pitch his soaring thoughts beyond the level of mortality, but clip the wings of his towering ambition, and obligingly submit and condescend to the weakness of others, it being many times a piece of complaisance to go out of the road for company's sake. No (say you), this is a grand piece of Folly : true, but yet all our living is no more than such kind of fooling, which though it may seem harsh to assert, yet it is not so strange as true.

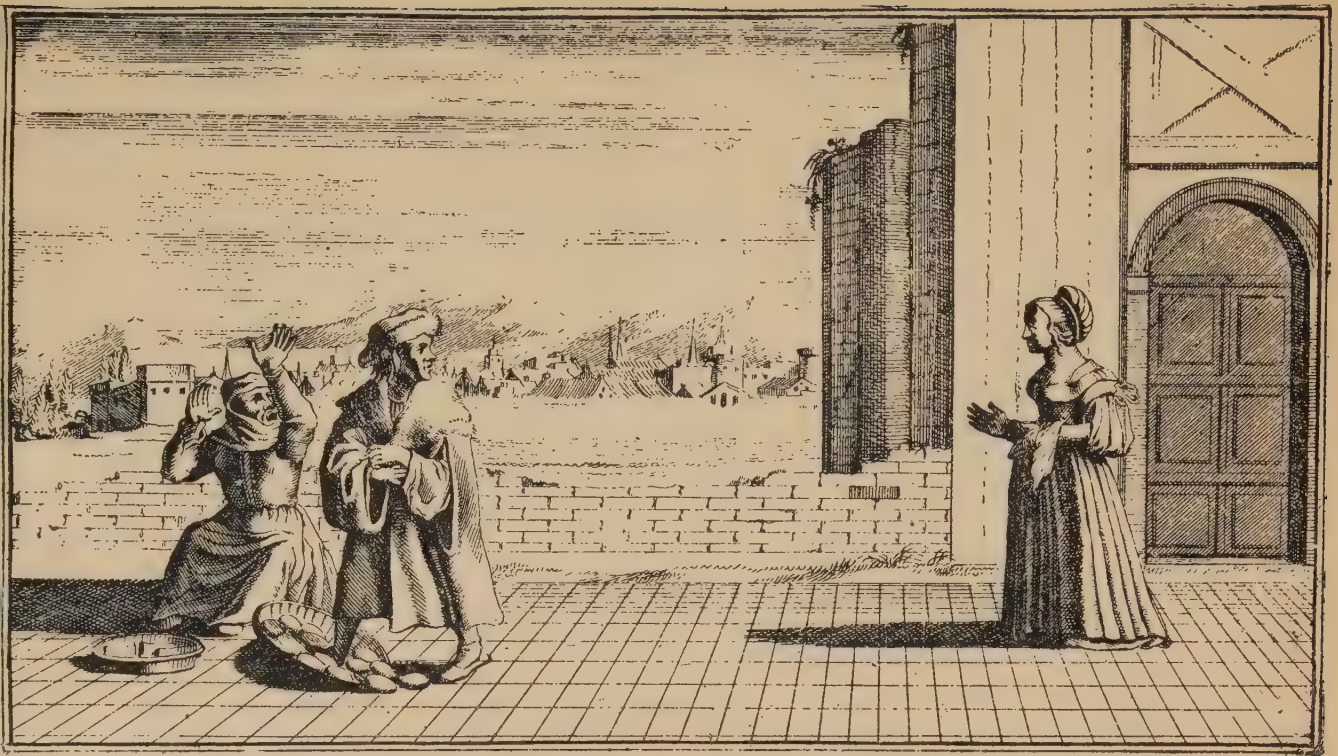
For the better making it out it might perhaps be requisite to invoke the aid of the muses, to whom the poets devoutly apply themselves upon far more slender occasions. Come then and assist, ye Heliconian lasses, while I attempt to prove that there is no method for an arrival at wisdom, and consequently no track to the goal of happiness, without the instructions and directions of Folly.

And here, in the first place, it has been already acknowledged that all the passions are enlisted under my regiment, since this is resolved to be the only distinction betwixt a wise man and a fool, that the latter is governed by passion, the other guided by reason ; and therefore the Stoics look upon passions as no other than the in-

fection and malady of the soul that disorders the constitution of the whole man, and by putting the spirits into a feverish ferment, occasions many times some mortal distemper. And yet these, however decried, are not only our tutors to instruct us towards the attainment of wisdom, but even embolden us likewise, and spur us on to a quicker dispatch of all our undertakings. This, I suppose, will be stomached by the stoical Seneca, who pretends that the only emblem of wisdom is the man without passion; whereas the supposing any person to be so, is perfectly to unman him, or else transform him into some fabulous deity that never was, nor ever will be; nay, to speak more plainly, it is but the making him a mere statue, immovable, senseless, and altogether inactive. And if this be their wise man, let them take him to themselves, and remove him into Plato's commonwealth, the new Atlantis, or some other-like fairy land.

For who would not hate and avoid such a person as should be deaf to all the dictates of common sense? that should have no more power of love or pity than a block or stone that remains heedless of all dangers? that thinks he can never mistake, but can foresee all contingencies at the greatest distance, and make provision for the worst presages? that feeds upon himself and his own thoughts? that monopolizes health, wealth, power, dignity, and all to himself? that loves no man, nor is beloved of any? that has the impudence to tax even divine providence of ill contrivance, and proudly grudges, nay, tramples under foot all other men's reputation; and this is he that is the Stoic's perfectly wise man.

But prithee, what city would choose such a magistrate?



Folly among the Greeks and Latins.

what army would be willing to serve under such a commander? or what woman would be content with such an incompetent husband. Who would invite such a guest? or what servant would be retained under such a master? The most illiterate mechanic would in all respects be a more acceptable man, for he would be frolicsome with his wife, free with his friends, jovial at a feast, pliable in converse, and obliging to all company.

But I am tired out with this part of my subject, and so must pass to other topics.

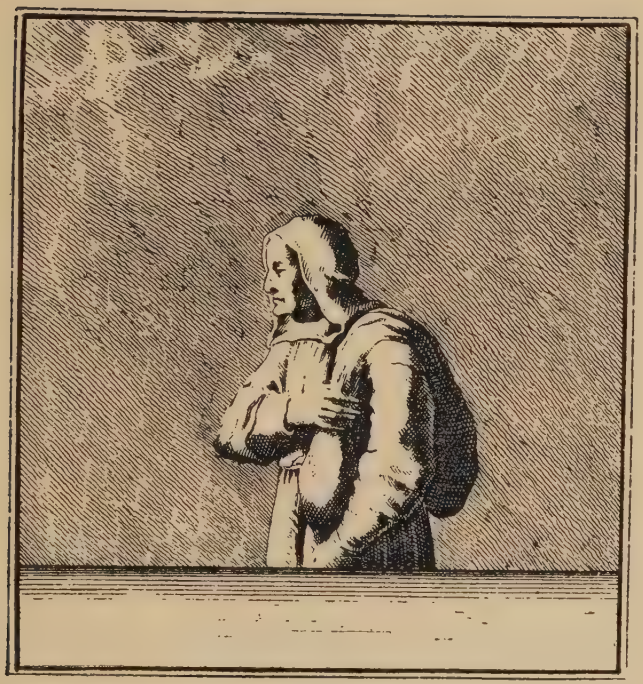
And now were any one placed on that tower, from whence Jove is fancied by the poets to survey the world, he would discern all around how many grievances and calamities our whole life is on every side encompassed with: how unclean our birth, how troublesome our tendance in the cradle, how liable our childhood is to a thousand misfortunes, how toilsome and full of drudgery our riper years, how heavy and uncomfortable our old age, and lastly, how unwelcome the unavoidableness of death. Farther, in every course of life how many wracks there may be of torturing diseases, how many unhappy accidents may casually occur, how many unexpected disasters may arise, and what strange alterations may one moment produce? Not to mention such miseries as men are mutually the cause of, as poverty, imprisonment, slander, reproach, revenge, treachery, malice, cousenage, deceit, and so many more, as to reckon them all would be as puzzling arithmetic as the numbering of the sands.

How mankind became environed with such hard circumstances, or what deity imposed these plagues, as a penance on rebellious mortals, I am not now at leisure

to enquire: but whoever seriously takes them into consideration must needs commend the value of the Milesian virgins, who voluntarily killed themselves to get rid of a troublesome world: and how many wise men have taken the same course of becoming their own executioners: among whom, not to mention Diogenes, Xenocrates, Cato, Cassius, Brutus, and other heroes, the self-denying Chiron is never enough to be commended; who, when he was offered by Apollo the privilege of being exempted from death, and living on to the world's end, refused the enticing proposal, as deservedly thinking it a punishment rather than a reward.

But if all were thus wise you see how soon the world would be unpeopled, and what need there would be of a second Prometheus, to plaster up the decayed image of mankind. I therefore come and stand in this gap of danger, and prevent farther mischief; partly by ignorance, partly by inadvertence; by the oblivion of whatever would be grating to remember, and the hopes of whatever may be grateful to expect, together palliating all griefs with an intermixture of pleasure; whereby I make men so far from being weary of their lives, that when their thread is spun to its full length, they are yet unwilling to die, and hardly can be brought to take their last farewell of their friends.

Thus some decrepit old fellows, that look as hollow as the grave into which they are falling, that rattle in the throat at every word they speak, that can eat no meat but what is tender enough to suck, that have more hair on their beard than they have on their head, and go stooping toward the dust they must shortly return to;



The Begging Friar.

whose skin seems already drest into parchment, and their bones already dried to a skeleton ; these shadows of men shall be wonderful ambitious of living longer, and therefore fence off the attacks of death with all imaginable sleights and impostures ; one shall dye his gray hairs, for fear their color should betray his age ; another shall spruce himself up in a light periwig ; a third shall repair the loss of his teeth with an ivory set ; and a fourth perhaps shall fall deeply in love with a young girl, and accordingly court her with as much of gaiety and briskness as the liveliest spark in the whole town : and we cannot but know, that for an old man to marry a young wife without a portion, to be a cooler to other men's lust, is grown so common, that it has become the a-la-mode of the times. And what is yet more comical, you shall have some wrinkled old woman, whose very looks are a sufficient antidote to lechery, that shall be canting out, "*Ah, life is a sweet thing*," and so run a caterwauling, and hire some strong-backed suitors to recover their almost lost sense of feeling ; and to set themselves off the better, they shall paint and daub their faces, always stand a tricking up themselves at their looking-glass, go naked-necked, bare-breasted, be tickled at a vulgar jest, dance among the young girls, write love-letters, and do all the other knacks of attracting hot-blooded suitors ; and in the meanwhile, however they are laughed at, they enjoy themselves to the full, live to their hearts' desire, and want for nothing that may complete their happiness. As for those that think them herein so ridiculous, I would have them give an ingenuous answer to this one query, whether if folly or hanging were left to their choice, they

had not much rather live like fools, than die like dogs? But what matter is it if these things are resented by the vulgar? Their ill word is no injury to fools, who are either altogether insensible of any affront, or at least lay it not much to heart. If they were knocked on the head, or had their brains dashed out, they would have some cause to complain; but alas, slander, calumny, and disgrace, are not otherwise injurious than as they are interpreted; nor otherwise evil than as they are thought to be so. What harm is it then if all persons deride and scoff you, if you bear but up in your own thoughts, and be yourself thoroughly conceited of your deserts? And prithee, why should it be thought any scandal to be a fool, since the being so is one part of our nature and essence; and as so, our not being wise can no more reasonably be imputed as a fault, than it would be proper to laugh at a man because he cannot fly in the air like birds and fowls; because he goes not on all fours as beasts of the field; because he does not wear a pair of visible horns as a crest on his forehead, like bulls or stags. By the same figure we may call a horse unhappy, because he was never taught his grammar; and an ox miserable, because he never learned to fence. But, sure as a horse, though not knowing a letter is nevertheless valuable, so a man, for being a fool, is never the more unfortunate, it being by nature and providence so ordained for each.

Ay, but (say our patrons of wisdom) the knowledge of arts and sciences is purposely attainable by men, that the defect of natural parts may be supplied by the help of those acquired: as if it were probable that nature, which

The First Scene of Infancy.

has been so exact and curious in the mechanism of flowers, herbs, and flies, should have bungled most in her masterpiece, and made man as it were by halves, to be afterward polished and refined by his own industry, in the attainment of such sciences as the Egyptians feigned were invented by their god Theuth, as a sure plague and punishment to mankind, being so far from augmenting their happiness, that they do not answer the end that they were first designed for, which was the improvement of memory, as Plato in his Phædrus doth wittily observe.

In the first golden age of the world, there was no need of these perplexities; there was then no other sort of learning but what was collected from every man's common sense, improved by an easy experience.

What use could there have been of grammar, when all men spoke the same mother-tongue, and aimed at no higher pitch of oratory, than barely to be understood by each other? What need of logic, when they were too wise to enter into any dispute? or what occasion for rhetoric, where no difference arose to require any laborious decision? And as little reason had they to be tied up by any laws, since the dictates of nature and common morality were restraint and obligation sufficient: and as to all the mysteries of providence, they made them rather the object of their wonder, than their curiosity; and therefore were not so presumptuous as to dive into the depths of nature, to labor for the solving of all phenomena in astronomy, or to wrack their brains in the splitting of entities, and unfolding the nicest speculations, judging it a crime for any man to aim at what is put beyond the reach of his shallow apprehension.

Thus was ignorance, in the infancy of the world, as much the parent of happiness as it has since been of devotion; but as soon as the golden age began by degrees to degenerate into the more common metals, then were arts likewise invented; yet at first but few in number, and those rarely understood, till in farther process of time the superstition of the Chaldeans, and the curiosity of the Grecians, spawned so many subtleties, that now it is scarce the work of an age to be thoroughly acquainted with all the criticisms in grammar only. And among all the several Arts, those are proportionably most esteemed that come nearest to weakness and folly. For thus divines may bite their nails, and naturalists may blow their fingers, astrologers may know their own fortune is to be poor, and the logician may shut his fist and grasp the wind.

While all these hard-named fellows cannot make
So great a figure as a single quack.

And in this profession, those that have most confidence, though the least skill, shall be sure of the greatest custom; and indeed this whole art as it is now practised, is but one incorporated compound of craft and imposture.

Next to the physician comes the lawyer, (who will perhaps commence a suit with me for not having been first mentioned), who is so silly as to be, proverbially, an *ignoramus*, and yet by such are all difficulties solved, all controversies determined, and all affairs managed so much to their own advantage, that they get those estates to themselves which they are employed to recover for their clients: while in the mean time the poor divine shall have the lice crawl upon his thread-bare gown,

The Lawyer.

The Old Man Spruced Up.

The Old Woman Spruced up.

before, by all his sweat and drudgery, he can get money enough to purchase a new one. As those arts therefore are most advantageous to their respective professors which are farthest distant from wisdom, so are those persons incomparably most happy that have least to do with any at all, but jog on in the common road of nature, which will never mislead us, except we voluntarily leap over those boundaries which she has cautiously set to all finite beings. Nature glitters most in her own plain, homely garb, and then gives the greatest lustre when she is unsullied from all artificial garnish.

Thus if we enquire into the state of all dumb creatures, we shall find that those fare best that are left to nature's conduct: as for instance in bees, what is more to be admired than the industry and contrivance of these little insects? What architect could ever form so curious a structure as they give a model of in their inimitable combs? What kingdom can be governed with better discipline than they exactly observe in their respective hives? While the horse, by turning a rebel to nature, and becoming a slave to man, undergoes the worst of tyranny.

He is sometimes spurred on to battle when wounded so severely that his intestines drag after him, and, falling, he bites the ground instead of grass; not to mention the cruelty of his jaws being curbed, his tail docked, his back wrung, his sides spur-galled, his close imprisonment in a stable, and a great many other plagues, which he might have avoided if he had kept to that first station of freedom in which nature placed him.

How much more desirable is the unconfined range of

flies and birds, who living by instinct, would want nothing to complete their happiness, if some well-employed Domitian would not persecute the former, nor the sly fowler lay snares and gins for the entrapping of the other? And if young birds, before their unfledged wings can carry them from their nests, are caught, and pent up in a cage for the purpose of learning them to sing or whistle, all their new tunes make not half such sweet music as their wild notes, and natural melody—so much does that which is but rough-drawn by nature surpass and excel all the additional paint and varnish of art, and we cannot but commend and admire that Pythagorean cock, which (as Lucian relates) had been successively a man, a woman, a prince, a subject, a fish, a horse, and a frog: after all his experience, he summed up his judgment in this censure, that "Man was the most wretched and deplorable of all creatures, all others patiently grazing within the enclosures of nature, while man only broke out, and strayed beyond those safer limits, which he was justly confined to." And Gryllus is to be adjuged wiser than the much counseling Ulysses, inasmuch as when by the enchantment of Circe he had been turned into a hog, he would not lay down his swinishness, nor forsake his beloved sty, to run the peril of a hazardous voyage.

For a farther confirmation whereof I have the authority of Homer, that captain of all poetry, who, as he gives to mankind in general, the epithet of wretched and unhappy, so he bestows in particular upon Ulysses the title of miserable, which he never attributes to Paris, Ajax, Achilles, or any other of the commanders; and that for

The Capuchin.

this reason, because Ulysses was more crafty, cautious, and wise, than any of the rest.

As those therefore fall shortest of happiness that reach highest at wisdom, meeting with the greater repulse for soaring beyond the boundaries of their nature, and without remembering themselves to be but men, like the fallen angels, daring them to vie with Omnipotence, and giant-like scale heaven with the engines of their own brain; so are those most exalted in the road of bliss that degenerate nearest into brutes, and quietly divest themselves of all use and exercise of reason.

And this we can prove by a familiar instance. As namely, can there be any one sort of men that enjoy themselves better than those which we call changelings, idiots, fools, and naturals? It may perhaps sound harsh, but upon due consideration it will be found absolutely true, that these persons in all circumstances fare best, and live most comfortably; as first, they are void of all fear, which is a very great privilege to be exempted from; they are troubled with no remorse, nor pricks of conscience; they are not frighted with any bugbear stories of another world; they startle not at the fancied appearance of ghosts, or apparitions; they are not wracked with the dread of impending mischiefs, nor bandied with the hopes of any expected enjoyments: in short, they are unassaulted by all those legions of cares that war against the quiet of rational souls; they are ashamed of nothing, fear no man, banish the uneasiness of ambition, envy, and love; and to add the reversion of a future happiness to the enjoyment of a present one,—they have no sin neither to answer for; divines unanimously maintaining

that a gross and unavoidable ignorance does not only extenuate and abate from the aggravation, but wholly expiates the guilt of any immorality.

Come now then as many of you as challenge the respect of being accounted wise, ingenuously confess how many insurrections of rebellious thoughts, and pangs of a laboring mind, ye are perpetually vexed and tortured with ; reckon up all those inconveniences that you are unavoidably subject to, and then tell me whether fools, by being exempted from all these embroilments, are not infinitely more free and happy than yourselves? Add to this, that fools do not barely laugh and sing, and play the good-fellow alone to themselves : but as it is the nature of good to be communicative, so they impart their mirth to others, by making sport for the whole company they are at any time engaged in, as if providence purposely designed them for an antidote to melancholy: whereby they make all persons so fond of their society, that they are welcomed to all places, hugged, caressed, and defended, a liberty given them of saying or doing anything ; so well beloved, that none dares to offer them the least injury ; nay, the most ravenous beasts of prey will pass them by untouched, as if by instinct they were warned that such innocence ought to receive no hurt. Farther, their converse is so acceptable in the court of princes, that few kings will banquet, walk, or take any other diversion, without their attendance ; nay, and had much rather have their company, than that of their gravest counselors, whom they maintain more for fashion-sake than good-will ; nor is it so strange that these fools should be preferred before graver politicians, since these

The Commentator.

last, by their harsh, sour advice, and ill-timing the truth, are fit only to put a prince out of humor, while the others laugh, and talk, and joke, without any danger of disobliging.

It is another very commendable property of fools, that they always speak the truth, than which there is nothing more noble and heroical. For so, though Plato relates it as a sentence of Alcibiades, that in the sea of drunkenness truth swims uppermost, and so wine is the only teller of truth, yet this character may more justly be assumed by me, as I can make good from the authority of Euripides, who lays down this as an axiom μωρὰ μωρός λεγέι, children and fools always speak the truth.

Whatever the fool has in his heart he betrays it in his face: or what is more evident, discovers it by his words: while the wise man, as Euripides observes, carries a double tongue ; the one to speak what may be said, the other what ought to be ; the one what truth, the other what the times require : whereby he can in a trice so alter his judgment, as to prove that to be now white, which he had just before sworn to be black ; like the satyr at his porridge, blowing hot and cold at the same breath ; in his lips professing one thing, when in his heart he means another.

Futhermore, princes in their greatest splendor seem upon this account unhappy, in that they miss the advantage of being told the truth, and are shammed off by a parcel of insinuating courtiers, that acquit themselves as flatterers more than as friends. But some will perchance object, that princes do not love to hear the truth, and

therefore wise men must be very cautious how they behave themselves before them, lest they should take too great a liberty in speaking what is true, rather than what is acceptable.

This much must be confessed, that truth indeed is seldom palatable to the ears of kings; yet fools have so great a privilege as to have free leave, not only to speak bare truths, but the most bitter ones too; so as the same reproof, which had it come from the mouth of a wise man would have cost him his head, being blurted out by a fool, is not only pardoned, but welcomed and rewarded. For truth has naturally a mixture of pleasure, if it carry with it nothing of offence to the person whom it is applied to; and the happy knack of ordering it so is bestowed only on fools.

'Tis for the same reason that this sort of men are more fondly beloved by women, who like their tumbling them about, and playing with them though never so boisterously; pretending to take that only in jest, which they would have to be meant in earnest, as that sex is very ingenious in palliating, and dissembling the bent of their wanton inclinations.

But to return. An additional happiness of these fools appears farther in this, that when they have run merrily on to their last stage of life, they neither find any fear nor feel any pain to die, but march contentedly to the other world, where their company must surely be as acceptable as it was here upon earth.

Let us draw now a comparison between the condition of a fool and that of a wise man, and see how infinitely the one outweighs the other.

The Daily Tally of Psalms.

Give me any instance then, of a man as wise as you can fancy him possible to be, that has spent all his younger years in poring over books, and trudging after learning, in the pursuit whereof he squanders away the pleasantest time of his life in watching, sweating, and fasting ; and in his latter days he never tastes one mouthful of delight, but is always stingy, poor, dejected, melancholy, burthensome to himself, and unwelcome to others, pale, lean, thin-jawed, sickly, contracting by his sedentariness such hurtful distempers as bring him to an untimely death, like rose-buds plucked before they bloom. Thus have you a picture of the wise man's happiness—more the object of commiseration and pity, than of jealousy and envy.

But now again come the croaking Stoics, and tell me in mood and figure, that nothing is more miserable than the being mad : but the being a fool is the being mad : therefore there is nothing more miserable than the being a fool. Alas, this is but a fallacy, the discovery whereof solves the force of the whole syllogism. Well then, they argue subtlely, 'tis true ; but as Socrates in Plato makes two Venuses and two Cupids, and shows how their actions and properties ought not to be confounded ; so these disputants, if they had not been mad themselves should have distinguished between a double madness in others : and there is certainly a great difference in the nature as well as in the degrees of them, and they are not both equally scandalous ; for Horace seems to take delight in one sort, when he says :—

Does welcome frenzy make me thus mistake?

And Plato in his Phædon ranks the madness of poets,

of prophets, and of lovers among those properties which conduce to a happy life. And Virgil, in the sixth Æneid, gives this epithet to his industrious Æneas :—

If you will proceed to these your mad attempts.

And indeed there is a two-fold sort of madness ; the one that which the furies bring from hell ; those that are herewith possessed, are hurried on to wars and contentions, by an inexhaustible thirst of power and riches, inflamed to some infamous and unlawful lust, enraged to act the parricide, seduced to become guilty of incest, sacrilege, or some other of those crimson-dyed crimes ; or, finally, to be so pricked in conscience as to be lashed and stung with the whips and snakes of grief and remorse. But there is another sort of madness that proceeds from Folly, so far from being any way injurious or distasteful that it is thoroughly good and desirable ; and this happens when by a harmless mistake in the judgment of things the mind is freed from those cares which would otherwise gratingly afflict it, and smoothed over with a content and satisfaction it could not under other circumstances so happily enjoy.

And this is that comfortable apathy or insensibleness which Cicero, in an epistle to his friend Atticus, wishes himself master of, that he might the less take to heart those insufferable outrages committed by the tyrannizing triumvirate, Lepidus, Antonius, and Augustus.

That Grecian likewise had a happy time of it, who was so frantic as to sit a whole day in an empty theatre laughing, shouting, and clapping his hands, as if he had really seen some pathetic tragedy acted to the life, when indeed all was no more than the strength of

The Last shall be First, and the First, Last.

The Mystery of Fate.

imagination, and the effects of delusion, while in all other respects the same person behaved himself very discreetly, was—

Sweet to his friends, to his wife, obliging, kind,
And so averse from a revengeful mind,
That had his men unsealed his bottled wine,
He would not fret, nor doggedly repine.

And when by a course of physic he was recovered from this frenzy, he looked upon his cure so far from a kindness, that he thus reasons the case with his friends:

This remedy, my friends, is worse i' th' main
Than the disease, the cure augments the pain;
My only hope is a relapse again.

And certainly they were the more mad of the two who endeavored to bereave him of so pleasing a delirium, and recall all the aches of his head by dispelling the mists of his brain.

I have not yet determined whether it be proper to include all the defects of sense and understanding under the common genius of madness. For if anyone be so short-sighted as to take a mule for an ass, or so shallow-pated as to admire a paltry ballad for an elegant poem, he is not thereupon immediately censured as mad. But if anyone let not only his senses but his judgment be imposed upon in the most ordinary common concerns, he shall come under the scandal of being thought next door to a madman. As suppose any one should hear an ass bray, and should take it for ravishing music; or if any one, born a beggar, should fancy himself as great as a prince, or the like. But this sort of madness, if (as is

most usual) it be accompanied with pleasure, brings a great satisfaction both to those who are possessed with it themselves, and those who deride it in others, though they are not both equally frantic. And this species of madness is of larger extent than the world commonly imagines. Thus the whole tribe of madmen make sport among themselves, while one laughs at another; he that is more mad many times jeering him that is less so.

But indeed the greater each man's madness is, the greater is his happiness, if it be but such a sort as proceeds from an excess of folly, which is so epidemical a distemper that it is hard to find any one man so uninfected as not to have sometimes a fit or two of some sort of frenzy. There is only this difference between the several patients: He that shall take a broom-stick for a straight-bodied woman is without more ado sentenced for a madman, because this is so strange a blunder as very seldom happens; whereas he whose wife is a common jilt, that keeps a warehouse free for all customers, and yet swears she is as chaste as an untouched virgin, and hugs himself in his contented mistake, is scarce taken notice of, because he fares no worse than a great many more of his good-natured neighbors. Among these are to be ranked such as take an immoderate delight in hunting, and think no music comparable to the sounding of horns and the yelping of beagles; and were they to take physic, would without question think the most sovereign virtues to be in the *album Græcum* of a dog's excrements.

When they have run down their game, what strange pleasure they take in cutting of it up! Cows and sheep may be slaughtered by common butchers, but what is

The Lazy Wretch.

killed in hunting must be broken up by none under a gentleman, who shall throw down his hat, fall devoutly on his knees, and drawing out a slashing hanger (for a common knife is not good enough), after several ceremonies shall dissect all the parts as artificially as the best anatomist, while all that stand round shall look very intently, and seem to be mightily surprised with the novelty, though they have seen the same an hundred times before ; and he that can but dip his finger, and taste of the blood, shall think his own bettered by it ; and though the constant feeding on such diet does but assimilate them to the nature of those beasts they eat of, yet they will swear that venison is meat for princes, and that their living upon it makes them as great as emperors.

Near akin to these are such as take a great fancy for building. They raise up, pull down, begin anew, alter the model, and never rest till they run themselves out of their whole estate, taking up such a compass for buildings, till they leave themselves not one foot of land to live upon, nor one poor cottage to shelter themselves from cold and hunger ; and yet all the while are mighty proud of their contrivances, and sing a sweet *requiem* to their own happiness.

To these are to be added those plodding virtuosos, that plunder the most inward recesses of nature for the pillage of a new invention, and rake over sea and land for the turning up some hitherto latent mystery ; and are so continually tickled with the hopes of success, that they spare for no cost nor pains, but trudge on, and upon a defeat in one attempt, courageously tack about to an-

other, and fall upon new experiments, never giving over till they have calcined their whole estate to ashes, and have not money enough left unmelted to purchase one crucible or limbeck. And yet after all, they are not so much discouraged, but that they dream fine things still, and influence others all they can to the like undertakings ; nay, when their hopes come to the last gasp, after all their disappointments, they have yet one *salvo* for their credit, that :—

In great exploits our bare attempts suffice.

And so inveigh against the shortness of their life, which allows them not time enough to bring their designs to maturity and perfection.

Whether dice-players may be so favorably dealt with as to be admitted among the rest, is scarce yet resolved upon : but sure it is hugely vain and ridiculous, when we see some persons so devoutly addicted to this diversion, that at the first rattle of the box their heart shakes within them, and keeps consort with the motion of the dice: they are egged on so long with the hopes of always winning, till at last, in a literal sense, they have thrown away their whole estate, and made shipwreck of all they have, scarce escaping to shore with their own clothes to their backs ; thinking it in the meanwhile a great piece of religion to be just in the payment of their stakes, and will cheat any creditor sooner than him who trusts them in play : and that poring old men, that cannot tell their cast without the help of spectacles, should be sweating at the same sport ; nay, that such decrepit blades, as by the gout have lost the use of their fingers, should look over, and hire others to throw for them. This indeed

The Dice Players.

Profusely Lavish in Charity

is prodigiously extravagant ; but the consequence of it ends so oft in downright madness, that it seems rather to belong to the furies than to folly.

The next to be placed among the regiment of fools are such as make a trade of telling or enquiring after incredible stories of miracles and prodigies : never doubting that a lie will choke them, they will muster up a thousand several strange relations of spirits, ghosts, apparitions, raising of the devil, and such like bugbears of superstition, which the farther they are from being probably true, the more greedily they are swallowed, and the more devoutly believed. And these absurdities do not only bring an empty pleasure, and cheap divertisement, but they procure a comfortable income to such priests and friars as by this craft get their gain. To these again are nearly related such others as attribute strange virtues to the shrines and images of saints and martyrs, and so would make their credulous proselytes believe, that if they pay their devotion to St. Christopher in the morning, they shall be guarded and secured the day following from all dangers and misfortunes : if soldiers, when they first take arms, shall come and mumble over such a set prayer before the picture of St. Barbara, they shall return safe from all engagements : or if any pray to Erasmus on such particular holidays, with the ceremony of wax candles, and other fopperies, he shall in a short time be rewarded with a plentiful increase of wealth and riches. The Christians have now their gigantic St. George, as well as the Pagans had their Hercules ; they paint the saint on horseback, and picture the horse in splendid trappings, very gloriously accoutred, they

scarce refrain in a literal sense from worshiping the very beast.

What shall I say of such as cry up and maintain the cheat of pardons and indulgences? that by these compute the time of each soul's residence in purgatory, and assign them a longer or shorter continuance, according as they purchase more or fewer of these paltry pardons, and saleable exemptions? Or what can be said bad enough of others, who pretend that by the force of such magical charms, or by the fumbling over their beads in the rehearsal of such and such petitions (which some religious impostors invented, either for diversion, or what is more likely, for advantage), they shall procure riches, honor, pleasure, health, long life, a lusty old age, nay, after death a sitting at the right hand of our Saviour in His kingdom; though as to this last part of their happiness, they care not how long it be deferred, having scarce any appetite toward a tasting the joys of heaven, till they are surfeited, glutted with, and can no longer relish their enjoyments on earth.

By this easy way of purchasing pardons, any notorious highwayman, any plundering soldier, or any bribe-taking judge, shall disburse some part of their unjust gains, and so think all their grossest impieties sufficiently atoned for; so many perjuries, lusts, drunkenness, quarrels, bloodsheds, cheats, treacheries, and all sorts of debaucheries, shall all be, as it were, struck a bargain for, and such a contract made, as if they had paid off all arrears, and might now begin upon a new score.

And what can be more ridiculous, than for some others to be confident of going to heaven by repeating daily

St. Bernard and the Devil.

those seven verses out of the Psalms, which the devil taught St. Bernard, thinking thereby to have put a trick upon him, but that he was over-reached in his cunning.

Several of these fooleries, which are so gross and absurd, as I myself am even ashamed to own, are practised and admired, not only by the vulgar, but by such proficients in religion as one might well expect should have more wit.

The custom of each country challenging their particular guardian-saint, proceeds from the same principles of folly; nay, each saint has his distinct office allotted to him, and is accordingly addressed to upon the respective occasions: as one for the tooth-ache, a second to grant an easy delivery in child-birth, a third to recover lost goods, another to protect seamen in a long voyage, a fifth to guard the farmer's cows and sheep, and so on; for to rehearse all instances would be extremely tedious.

There are some more catholic saints petitioned to upon all occasions, as more especially the Virgin Mary, whose blind devotees think it manners now to place the mother before the son.

And of all the prayers and intercessions that are made to these respective saints, the substance of them is no more than downright Folly.

Among all the trophies that for tokens of gratitude are hung upon the walls and ceilings of churches, you shall find no relics presented as a memorandum of any that were ever cured of Folly, or had been made one dram the wiser. One perhaps after shipwreck got safe to shore; another recovered when he had been run through by an enemy; one, when all his fellow-soldiers

were killed upon the spot, as cunningly perhaps as cowardly, made his escape from the field ; another, while he was a hanging, the rope broke, and so he saved his neck, and renewed his license for practicing his old trade of thieving ; another broke jail, and got loose ; a patient (against his physician's will) recovered of a dangerous fever ; another drank poison, which putting him into a violent looseness, did his body more good than harm, to the great grief of his wife, who hoped upon this occasion to have become a joyful widow ; another had his wagon overturned, and yet none of his horses lamed ; another had caught a grievous fall, and yet recovered from the bruise ; another had been tampering with his neighbor's wife, and escaped very narrowly from being caught by the enraged cuckold in the very act. After all these acknowledgments of escapes from such singular dangers, there is none (as I have before intimated) that returns thanks for being freed from Folly ; Folly being so sweet and luscious, that it is rather sued for as a happiness, than deprecated as a punishment. But why should I launch out into so wide a sea of superstitions?

Had I as many tongues as Argus eyes,
Briareus hands, they all would not suffice
Folly in all her shapes t' epitomize.

Almost all Christians being wretchedly enslaved to blindness and ignorance, which the priests are so far from preventing or removing, that they blacken the darkness, and promote the delusion ; wisely foreseeing that the people (like cows, which never give down their milk so well as when they are gently stroked), would part with less if they knew more, their bounty proceed-

The Actor.

ing only from a mistake of charity. Now if any grave, wise man should stand up, and unseasonably speak the truth, telling every one that a pious life is the only way of securing a happy death ; that the best title to a pardon of our sins is purchased by a hearty abhorrence of our guilt, and sincere resolutions of amendment ; that the best devotion which can be paid to any saints is to imitate them in their exemplary life ; if he should proceed thus to inform them of their several mistakes, there would be quite another estimate put upon tears, watchings, masses, fastings, and other severities, which before were so much prized, as persons will now be vexed to lose that satisfaction they formerly found in them.

In the same predicament of fools are to be ranked such, as while they are yet living, and in good health, take so great a care how they shall be buried when they die, that they solemnly appoint how many torches, how many escutcheons, how many gloves to be given, and how many mourners they will have at their funeral; as if they thought they themselves in their coffins could be sensible of what respect was paid to their corpse ; or as if they doubted they should rest a whit the less quiet in the grave if they were with less state and pomp interred.

Now, though I am in so great haste, as I would not willingly be stopped or detained, yet I cannot pass by without bestowing some remarks upon another sort of fools ; who, though their first descent was perhaps no better than from a tapster or tinker, yet highly value themselves upon their birth and parentage. One fetches his pedigree from Æneas, another from Brute, a third

from king Arthur : they hang up their ancestors' worm-eaten pictures as records of antiquity, and keep a long list of their predecessors, with an account of all their offices and titles, while they themselves are but transcripts of their forefathers' dumb statues, and degenerate even into those very beasts which they carry in their coat of arms as ensigns of their nobility : and yet by a strong presumption of their birth and quality, they live not only the most unconcerned lives themselves, but there are not wanting others too who cry up these brutes as almost equal to the gods. But why should I dwell upon one or two instances of Folly, when there are so many of like nature. Conceitedness and self-love making many, by strength of Fancy, believe themselves happy, when otherwise they are really wretched and despicable. Thus the most ape-faced, ugliest fellow in the whole town, shall think himself a mirror of beauty : another shall be so proud of his parts, that if he can but mark out a triangle with a pair of compasses, he thinks he has mastered all the difficulties of geometry, and could outdo Euclid himself. A third shall admire himself for a ravishing musician, though he have no more skill in the handling of any instrument than a pig has of playing on the organ : and another, that rattles in the throat as hoarse as a cock crows, shall be proud of his voice, and think that he sings like a nightingale.

There is another very pleasant sort of madness, whereby persons assume to themselves whatever of accomplishment they discern in others. Thus the happy rich churl in Seneca, who had so short a memory, that

The Grammarian.

The Restorative of Youth.

he could not tell the least story without a servant standing by to prompt him, and was at the same time so weak that he could scarce go upright, yet he thought he might adventure to acccept a challenge to a duel, because he kept at home some lusty, sturdy fellows, whose strength he relied upon instead of his own.

It is almost needless to insist upon the several professors of arts and sciences, who are all so egregiously conceited, that they would sooner give up their title to an estate in lands, than part with the reversion of their wits: among these, more especially stage-players, musicians, orators, and poets, each of which, the more of duncery they have, and the more of pride, the greater is their ambition: and how notoriously soever dull they be, they meet with their admirers; nay, the more silly they are the higher they are extolled; Folly (as we have before intimated) never failing of respect and esteem. If therefore every one, the more ignorant he is, the greater satisfaction he is to himself, and the more commended by others, to what purpose is it to sweat and toil in the pursuit of true learning, which shall cost so many gripes and pangs of the brain to acquire, and when obtained, shall only make the laborious student more uneasy to himself, and less acceptable to others?

As nature in her dispensation of conceitedness has dealt with private persons, so has she given a particular smatch of self-love to each country and nation. Upon this account it is that the English challenge the prerogative of having the most handsome women, of being the most accomplished in the science of music, and of keeping the best tables. The Scotch brag of their gentility,

and pretend the genius of their native soil inclines them to be good disputants. The French think themselves remarkable for complaisance and good breeding; the Sorbonists of Paris pretend before any others to have made the greatest proficiency in polemic divinity. The Italians value themselves for learning and eloquence: and, like the Grecians of old, account all the world barbarians compared to themselves; to which piece of vanity the inhabitants of Rome are more especially addicted, pretending themselves to be owners of all those heroic virtues, which their city so many ages since was deservedly famous for. The Venitians stand upon their birth and pedigree. The Grecians pride themselves in having been the first inventors of most arts, and in their country being famed for the product of so many eminent philosophers. The Turks, and all the other refuse of Mahometanism, pretend they profess the only true religion, and laugh at all Christians for superstitious, narrow-souled fools. The Jews to this day expect their Messias as devoutly as they believe in their first prophet Moses. The Spaniards challenge the repute of being accounted good soldiers. And the Germans are noted for their tall, proper stature, and for their skill in magic.

But not to mention any more, I suppose you are already convinced how great an improvement and addition to the happiness of human life is occasioned by self-love: the next step to which is flattery; for as self-love is nothing but the coaxing up of ourselves, so the same currying and humoring of others is termed flattery.

Flattery, it is true, is now looked upon as a scandalous name, but it is by such only as mind words more than

Youth.

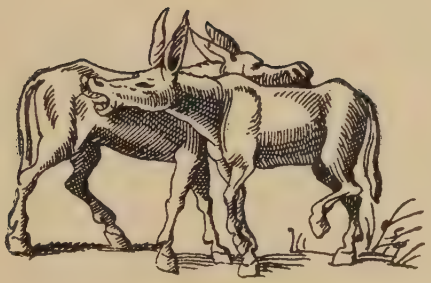
things. They are prejudiced against it upon this account, because they suppose it jostles out all truth and sincerity, whereas indeed its property is quite contrary, as appears from the examples of several brute creatures. What is more fawning than a spaniel? And yet what animal is more faithful to its master? What is more fond and loving than a tame squirrel? And yet what is more sportive and inoffensive? This little frisking creature is kept up in a cage to play withal, while lions, tigers, leopards, and such other savage emblems of rapine and cruelty are shown only for their great rarity, and otherwise yield no pleasure to their respective keepers.

There is indeed a pernicious and destructive sort of flattery wherewith rookers and sharks work their several ends upon such as they can make a prey of, by decoying them into traps and snares beyond recovery. But that which is the effect of folly is of a very different nature; it proceeds from a softness of spirit, and a flexibleness of good humor, and comes far nearer to virtue than that other extreme of friendship, namely, a stiff, sour, dogged moroseness: it refreshes our minds when tired, enlivens them when melancholy, reinforces them when languishing, invigorates them when heavy, recovers them when sick, and pacifies them when rebellious: it puts us in a method of procuring friends, and learns us how to keep them; it entices children to swallow the bitter rudiments of learning; it gives a new ferment to the almost stagnated souls of old men; it both reproves and inculcates principles without offence under the mask of commendation: in short, it makes every man fond and indulgent of himself, which is indeed no small part of each man's

happiness, and at the same time renders him obliging and complaisant in all company, where it is pleasant to see how the asses rub and scratch one another.

This again is a great accomplishment to an orator, a greater to a physician, and the only one to a poet: in fine, it is the best sweetener to all afflictions, and gives a true relish to the otherwise insipid enjoyments of our whole life. "Aye," (say you) "to flatter is to deceive; to deceive is very wrong and hurtful." No, rather just the reverse; nothing is more welcome and bewitching than the being deceived. They are much to be blamed for an undistinguishing head, that make a judgment of things according to what they are in themselves, when their whole nature consists barely in the opinions that are had of them.

For all sublinary matters are enveloped in such a cloud of obscurity, that the short-sightedness of human understanding, cannot pry through nor arrive at any comprehensive knowledge of them: hence the sect of academic philosophers have modestly resolved, that all things being no more than probable, nothing can be known as certain; or if there could, yet it would but interrupt and abate from the pleasure of a more happy gnorance. Finally, our souls are so fashioned and moulded, that they are sooner captivated by appearances than by real truths; of which, if any one would demand an example, he may find a familiar one in churches, where, if what is delivered from the pulpit be a grave, solid, rational discourse, all the congregation grow weary and fall asleep, till their patience be released; whereas, if the preacher (pardon the impropriety of the word, the



The Two Asses.

prater I should have said) be zealous, in his thumps of the cushion, his antic gestures, and spends his time in the telling of pleasant stories, his beloved shall then stand up, tuck their hair behind their ears, and be very devoutly attentive.

So among the saints, those are most resorted to who are most romantic and fabulous : as for instance, a poetic St. George, a St. Christopher, or a St. Barbara, shall be oftener prayed to than St. Peter, St. Paul, nay, perhaps than Christ himself ; but this, it is possible, may more probably be referred to another place.

In the mean while observe what a cheap purchase of happiness is made by the strength of fancy. For whereas many things even of inconsiderable value, would cost a great deal of pains and perhaps pelf, to procure ; opinion spares charges, and yet gives us them in as ample a manner by conceit, as if we possessed them in reality. Thus he who feeds on such a stinking dish of fish, as another must hold his nose at a yard's distance from, yet if he feed heartily, and relish them palatably, they are to him as good as if they were freshly caught ; whereas, on the other hand, if any one be invited to never so dainty a joul of sturgeon, if it go against his stomach to eat any, he may sit a hungry, and bite his nails with greater appetite than his victuals. If a woman be never so ugly and nauseous, yet if her husband can but think her handsome, it is all one to him as if she really were so : if any man have never so ordinary and disagreeable a drawing, yet if he admires the excellency of it, and can suppose it to have been drawn by some old Apelles, or modern Vandyke, he is as proud of it as if it had really

been drawn by one of them. I knew a friend of mine that presented his bride with several false and counterfeit stones, making her believe that they were real jewels, and cost him many hundred thousand crowns. Under this impression the deluded woman was as choice of pebbles and painted glass, as if they had been so many natural rubies and diamonds, while the subtle husband saved a large amount in his pocket, and yet made his wife as well pleased as if he had been at ten hundred times the cost. What difference is there between them that in the darkest dungeon can with a platonic brain survey the whole world in idea, and him that stands in the open air, and takes a less deluding prospect of the universe? If the beggar in Lucian, that dreamt he was a prince, had never waked, his imaginary kingdom had been as great as a real one. Between him therefore that truly is happy, and him that thinks himself so, there is no perceivable distinction; or if any, the fool has the better of it: first, because his happiness costs him less, standing him only in the price of a single thought; and then, secondly, because he has more fellow-companions and partakers of his good fortune; for no enjoyment is desirable where the benefit is not imparted to others; nor is any one station in life desirable, where we can have no converse with persons of the same condition with ourselves: and yet this is the hard fate of wise men, who are grown so scarce, that like the fabled Phœnix, but one appears in an age.

The Grecians, it is true, reckoned up seven within the narrow precints of their own country; yet I believe, were they to cast up their accounts anew, they would not

Imaginary Excellence.

The Juice Yielding Grape.

find a half, nay, not a third part, of one in far larger extent.

Farther, when among the several good properties of Bacchus this is looked upon as the chief, namely, that he drowns the cares and anxieties of the mind, though it be indeed but for a short time; for after a small nap, when our brains are a little settled, they all return to their former corrodings. How much greater is the more durable advantage which I bring? while by one uninterrupted state of being drunk in conceit, I perpetually cajole the mind with riots, revels, and all the excess and energy of joy.

Add to this, that I am so communicative and bountiful, as to let no one particular person pass without some token of my favor; whereas other deities bestow their gifts sparingly to their elect only. Bacchus has not thought fit that every soil should bear the same juice-yielding grape: Venus has not given to all a like portion of beauty: Mercury endows but few with the gift of a persuasive eloquence: Hercules gives not to all the same measure of wealth and power: Jupiter has destined but a few to inherit a kingdom: Mars in battle gives but to one party a complete victory; and often he makes them both losers: Apollo answers not the expectations of all who consult his oracles: Jove oft thunders: Phœbus sometimes shoots the plague or some other infectious disease at the point of his darts: and Neptune swallows down remorselessly many who trust his treacherous waves: not to mention their Ve-Jupiters, their Plutos, their Ate, goddess of loss, their evil geniuses, and such other monsters of divinity, as had more

of the hangman than the god in them, and were worshiped only to deprecate that hurt which used to be inflicted by them : I say, not to mention these, I am that high and mighty goddess, whose liberality is of as large an extent as her omnipotence : I give to all that ask : I never appear sullen, nor out of humor, nor ever demand any atonement or satisfaction for the omission of any ceremonious punctilio in my worship : I do not storm or rage, if mortals, in their addresses to the other gods pass me by unregarded, without the acknowledgment of any respect or application : whereas all the other gods are so scrupulous and exact, that it often proves less dangerous manfully to despise them, than sneakingly to attempt the difficulty of pleasing them. Thus some men are of that captious, perverse humor, that a man had better be wholly strangers to them, than never so intimate friends.

Well, but there are none (say you) who build any altars, or dedicate any temple to Folly. I am surprised (as I have before intimated) that the world should be so wretchedly ungrateful. But I am so good-natured as to pass by and pardon this seeming affront, though indeed the charge thereof, as unnecessary, may well be saved ; for to what purpose should I demand the sacrifice of frankincense, cakes, goats, and swine, since all persons everywhere pay me that more acceptable service, which all divines agree to be more effectual and meritorious, namely, an imitation of my various attributes? I do not therefore envy Diana for having her altars bedewed with human blood : I think myself then most religiously adored, when my respective devotees (as is their usual

The Worship of Descent.

An Apostle.

custom) conform themselves to my practice, transcribe my pattern, and so live the copy of me—their original. And truly this pious devotion is not so much in use among christians as is much to be wished it were: for how many zealous votaries are there that pay so profound a respect to the Virgin Mary, as to place lighted tapers even at noon day upon her altars? And yet how few of them copy after her untouched chastity, her modesty, and her other commendable virtues, in the imitation whereof consists the truest esteem of divine worship? Farther, why should I desire a temple, since the whole world is but one ample continued choir, entirely dedicated to my use and service? Nor do I want worshipers at any place where the earth wants not inhabitants. And as to the manner of my worship, I am not yet so irrecoverably foolish, as to be prayed to by proxy, and to have my honor intermediately bestowed upon senseless images and pictures, which quite subvert the true end of religion; while the unwary supplicants seldom distinguish betwixts the things themselves and the objects they represent.

The same respect in the meanwhile is paid to me in a more legitimate manner; for to me there are as many statues erected as there are moving fabrics of mortality; every person, even against his own will, carrying the image of me, *i.e.*, the seal of Folly instamped upon his countenance.

I have not therefore the least tempting inducement to envy the more seeming state and splendor of the other gods, who are worshiped at set times and places; as Phœbus at Rhodes, Venus in her Cyprian isle, Juno in

the city of Argos, Minerva at Athens, Jupiter on the hill Olympus, Neptune at Tarentum, and Priapus in the town of Lampsacum ; while my worship extending as far as my influence, the whole world is my one altar, whereon the most valuble incense and sacrifice is perpetually offered up.

But lest I should seem to speak this with more of confidence than truth, let us take a nearer view of the mode of men's lives, whereby it will be rendered more apparently evident what largesses I everywhere bestow, and how much I am respected and esteemed by persons from the highest to the lowest quality. For the proof whereof, it being too tedious to insist upon each particular, I shall only mention such in general as are most worthy the remark, from which by analogy we may easily judge of the remainder. And indeed to what purpose would it be singly to recount the commonality and rabble of mankind, who beyond all question are entirely on my side? and for a token of their vassalage do wear my livery in so many older shapes, and more newly invented modes of Folly, that the lungs of a thousand Democrituses would never hold out to such a laughter as this subject would excite ; and to these thousand must be superadded one more, to laugh at them as much as they do at the other.

It is indeed almost incredible to relate what mirth, what sport, what diversion, the groveling inhabitants here on earth give to the above-seated gods in heaven : for these exalted deities spend their fasting sober hours in listening to those petitions that are offered up, and in succoring such as appeal to them for redress ; but when

The Strength of Fancy.

they have imbibed a glass of nectar, they throw off all serious concerns, placing themselves on the ascent of some promontory in heaven, and from thence surveying the little mole-hill of earth. And trust me, there cannot be a more delightsome prospect, than to view such a theatre so stuffed and crammed with swarms of fools.

One falls desperately in love, and the more he is slighted the more does his spaniel-like passion increase; another is wedded to wealth rather than to a wife; a fourth is haunted with a jealousy of his visiting neighbors; another sobs and roars, and plays the child, for the death of a friend or relative; and lest his own tears should not rise high enough to express the torrent of his grief, he hires other mourners to accompany the corpse to the grave, and sing its *requiem* in sighs and lamentations; another hypocritically weeps at the funeral of one whose death at heart he rejoices for; here a gluttonous cormorant, whatever he can scrape up, thrusts all down his throat to pacify the cryings of a hungry stomach; there a lazy wretch sits yawning and stretching, and thinks nothing so desirable as sleep and idleness; some are extremely industrious in other men's business, and sottishly neglectful of their own; some think themselves rich because their credit is good, though they can never pay, till they fail, and compound for their debts; one is so covetous that he lives poor to die rich; one for a little uncertain gain will venture to cross the roughest seas, and expose his life for the purchase of a livelihood; another will depend on the plunders of war, rather than on the honest gains of peace; some will close with and humor such warm old blades as have a good estate, and no

children of their own to bestow it upon; others practice the same art of wheedling upon good old women, that have hoarded and coffered up more bags than they know how to dispose of; both of these sly flatteries make fine sport for the gods, when they are beaten at their own weapons, and (as oft happens) are gulled by those very persons they intended to make a prey of.

There is another sort of base scoundrels in gentility, such obsequious merchants, who, although they lie, swear, cheat, and practice all the intrigues of dishonesty, yet think themselves no way inferior to persons of the highest quality, only because they have raked together a plentiful estate; and there are not wanting such insinuating hangers on, as shall caress and compliment them with the greatest respect, in hopes of going snacks in some of their dishonest gains. There are others so infected with the philosophical paradox of banishing property, and having all things in common, that they make no conscience of fastening on, and purloining whatever they can get, and converting it to their own use and possession; there are some who are rich only in wishes, and yet while they barely dream of vast mountains of wealth, they are as happy as if their imaginary fancies were real truths; some put on the best side outermost, and starve themselves at home to appear gay and splendid abroad; one with an open handed freedom spends all he lays his fingers on; another with a logic-fisted gripingness catches at and grasps all he can come within the reach of; one apes it about the streets to court popularity; another consults his ease, and sticks to the confinement of a chimney-corner; many others are tugging

The Pilgrim.

hard at law for a trifle, and drive on an endless suit, only to enrich a deferring judge, or a knavish advocate ; one is for new-modeling a settled government ; another is for some notably heroic attempt ; and a third by all means must travel a pilgrim to Rome, Jerusalem, or some shrine of a saint elsewhere, though he have no other business than the paying of a formal obsequious visit, leaving his wife and children to fast, while he himself, forsooth, is gone to pray.

In short, if (as Lucian fancies Menippus to have done heretofore,) any man could now again look down from the orb of the moon, he would see thick swarms as it were of flies and gnats, that were quarreling with each other, jostling, fighting, fluttering, skipping, playing,—newly produced soon after decaying, and then immediately vanishing,—and it can scarce be imagined how many tumults and tragedies so inconsiderate a creature as man doth give occasion to, and that, in so short a space as the small span of human life, which is subject to so many casualties of sword, flame, famine, and pestilence, which often sweeps away thousands in the briefest periods of time.

But hold ; I should but expose myself too far, and incur the guilt of being roundly laughed at, if I proceed to enumerate the several kinds of the folly of the vulgar. I shall confine my following discourse, therefore, to such only as challenge the repute of wisdom, and seemingly pass for men of the soundest intellects.

And among these the Grammarians present themselves in the front,—a sort of men who would be the most miserable, the most slavish, and the most hateful of all per-

sons, if I did not in some way alleviate the cares and miseries of their profession by blessing them with a bewitching sort of madness : for they are not only liable to those five curses, which they so oft recite from the first five verses of Homer, but to five hundred more of a worse nature ; as being always damned to thirst and hunger,—to be choked with dust in their unswept schools, (schools shall I term them, or rather laboratories, nay, bridewells, and houses of correction?) to wear themselves out in fret and drudgery ; to be deafened with the noise of gaping boys ; and in short, to be stifled with heat and stench ; and yet they cheerfully endure all these inconveniences and, by the help of a fond conceit, they think themselves as happy as any men living : taking a great pride and delight in frowning and looking fierce upon the trembling urchins, in boxing the ears, slashing, striking with the ferula, and in the exercise of all their other methods of tyranny ; while thus lording it over a parcel of young, weak chits, they imitate the Cuman ass, and think themselves as stately as a lion, that domineers over all the inferior herd. Elevated with this conceit, they can hold filth and nastiness to be an ornament ; reconcile their nose to the most intolerable smells ; and finally think that their wretched surroundings are the most pleasant and desirable that can be conceived,—and which they would not consent to exchange for the jurisdiction of the most sovereign potentate. And they are yet more happy by a strong persuasion of their own parts and abilities ; for thus when their employment is only to rehearse silly stories, and poetical fictions, they will yet think themselves wiser

The Professor.

The Fabulous Story.

than the most experienced philosopher ; nay, they have an art of making ordinary people, (such as their school boys' fond parents,) think them as considerable as their own pride has made them.

Add hereunto this other sort of ravishing pleasure. When any of them has found out who was the mother of Anchises, or has lighted upon some old unusual word, such as *bubsequa ; bovinator ; manticulator ;* or other like obsolete cramp terms ; or can, after a great deal of poring, spell out the inscription of some battered monument ; Lord, what joy, what triumph, what congratulations of their success, as if they had conquered Africa, or taken Babylon the Great !

When they recite some of their frothy, bombastic verses, if any happen to admire them, they are presently flushed with the least hint of commendation, and devoutly thank Pythagoras for his grateful hypothesis, whereby they have now become actuated with a descent of Virgil's poetic soul. Nor is any divertisement more pleasant, than when they meet to flatter and curry one another ; yet they are so critical, that if any one happen to be guilty of the least slip, or seeming blunder, another shall presently correct him for it, and then to it they go in a tongue-combat, with all the fervor, spleen, and eagerness imaginable. May Priscian himself be my enemy, if what I am now going to say be not exactly true.

I knew an old Sophister that was a Grecian, a latinist, a mathematician, a philosopher, a musician, and all to the utmost perfection ; who, after threescore years' experience in the world, had spent the last twenty of them only in drudging to conquer the criticisms of grammar,

and made it the chief part of his prayers, that his life might be so long spared till he had learned how rightly to distinguish betwixt the eight parts of speech, which no grammarian, whether Greek or Latin, had yet accurately done. If any have chanced to place that as a conjunction which ought to have been used as an adverb, it is a sufficient cause to raise an alarm for doing justice to the injured word. And since there have been as many several grammars, as particular grammarians (nay, more, for Aldus alone wrote five distinct grammars for his own share), the schoolmaster must be obliged to consult them all, sparing for no time nor trouble, though never so great, lest he should be otherwise posed in an unobserved criticism, and so by an irreparable disgrace lose the reward of all his toil.

It is indifferent to me whether you call this folly or madness, since you must needs confess that it is by my influence these school tyrants, though in never so despicable a condition, are so happy in their own thoughts, that they would not change fortunes with the most illustrious Sophi of Persia.

The Poets, however somewhat less beholden to me, own a professed dependence on me, being a sort of lawless blades, that by prescription claim a license to a proverb, while the whole intent of their profession is only to smooth up and tickle the ears of fools, that by mere toys and fabulous shams, with which, (however ridiculous) they are so bolstered up in an airy imagination, as to win for themselves an everlasting name, and promise, by their balderdash, at the same time to celebrate the never-dying memory of others. To these rap-

turous wits self-love and flattery are never-failing attendants ; nor do any prove more zealous or constant devotees to folly.

The Rhetoricians likewise, though they are ambitious of being ranked among the Philosophers, yet are apparently of my faction, as appears among other arguments, by this more especially ; in that among their several topics of completing the art of oratory, they all particularly insist upon the knack of jesting, which is one species of folly ; as is evident from the books of oratory written to Herennius, put among Cicero's works, but done by some unknown author ; and in Quintilian, that great master of eloquence, there is one entire chapter used in describing the methods of raising laughter. In short, they may well attribute a great efficacy to Folly, since on any argument they may use, they can many times triumph by a slight laugh over what they could never seriously confute.

Of the same gang are those scribbling fops, who think to eternize their memory by setting up for authors : among which, though they are all in some way indebted to me, yet are those more especially so, who spoil paper in blotting it with mere trifles and impertinences. For as to those graver drudgers to the press, that write learnedly, beyond the reach of an ordinary reader, who dare submit their labors to the review of the most severe critic, these are not so liable to be envied for their honor, as to be pitied for their toil and slavery. They make additions, alterations, blot out, write anew, amend, interline, turn it upside down, and yet can never please their fickle judgment, but that they

shall dislike the next hour what they penned in the former; and all this to purchase the airy commendations of a few critical readers, which at most is but a poor reward for all their fastings, watchings, confinements, and brain-breaking tortures of invention.

Add to this the impairing of their health, the weakening of their constitution, their contracting sore eyes, or perhaps turning stark blind; their poverty, their envy, their debarment from all pleasures, their hastening on old age, their untimely death, and what other inconveniences of a like or worse nature can be thought upon; and yet the recompense for all this severe penance is at best no more than a mouthful or two of frothy praise.

These, as they are more laborious, so are they less happy than those other hackneyed scribblers which I first mentioned, who never stand much to consider, but write what comes next at a venture, knowing that the more silly their compositions are, the more will they be bought up by the greater number of readers, who are fools and blockheads; and if they should happen to be condemned by some few judicious persons, it is an easy matter by clamor to drown their censure, and to silence them by urging the more numerous commendations of others. They are yet the wisest who transcribe whole discourses from others, and then reprint them as their own. By doing so they make a cheap and easy seizure to themselves of that reputation which cost the first author so much time and trouble to procure. If however, they are at any time pricked a little in conscience for fear of discovery, they console themselves with this thought, that if they are at last found guilty of plagia-

The Rich Man.

rism, yet at least for some time they have enjoyed the credit of passing for genuine authors.

It is a pleasure to see how all these several writers are puffed up with the least blast of applause, especially if they come to the honor of being pointed at as they walk along the streets ; when their several pieces are laid open upon every bookseller's stall, when their names are embossed in a different character upon the title-page, sometimes only with the two first letters, and sometimes with fictitious titles, which few shall understand the meaning of ; and of those that do, all shall not agree in their verdict of the performance ; some censuring, others approving it, men's judgments being as different as their palates,—that being toothsome to one which is unsavory and nauseous to another,—though it is a sneaking piece of cowardice for authors to put feigned names to their works, as if, like bastards of their brain, they were afraid to own them. Thus one styles himself Telemachus, another Stelenus, a third Polycrates, another Thrasymachus, and so on. By the same liberty we may ransack the whole alphabet, and jumble together any letters that come next to hand.

It is farther very pleasant when these coxcombs employ their pens in writing congratulatory epistles, poems and panegyrics, upon each other, wherein one shall be complimented with the title of Alcæus, another as the incomparable Callimachus ; this shall be commended as a more complete orator than Tully himself ; a fourth shall be told by his fellow-fool that the divine Plato comes short of him for a philosophic soul. Sometimes again they take up the cudgels, and challenge an antagonist,

and so get a name by a combat at dispute and controversy while the unwary readers draw sides according to their different judgments. The longer the quarrel holds the more irreconcilable it grows ; and when both parties are weary, they each pretend themselves the conquerors, and both lay claim to the credit of coming off with victory.

These fooleries make sport for wise men, as being highly absurd, ridiculous and extravagant. True, but yet these paper combatants, by my assistance, are so flushed with a conceit of their own greatness, that they prefer the solving of a syllogism before the sacking of Carthage ; and upon the defeat of a poor objection carry themselves more triumphantly than the most victorious Scipio.

Nay, even the learned and more judicious, that have wit enough to laugh at the other's folly, are very much beholden to my goodness, which (except ingratitude has drowned their ingenuity,) they must be ready upon all occasions to confess.

Among these I suppose the lawyers will shuffle in for precedence, and they of all men have the greatest conceit of their own abilities. They will argue as confidently as if they spoke gospel instead of law ; they will cite you six hundred precedents, though not one of them come near to the case in hand ; they will muster up the authority of judgments, deeds, glosses, and reports, and tumble over so many musty records, that they make their employment, though in itself easy, the greatest slavery imaginable ;—always accounting that the best plea which they have taken the most pains to produce.

The Rhetorician.

The Divine.

To these, as bearing a great resemblance to them, may be added logicians and sophisters, fellows that talk as much by rote as a parrot ; who shall run down a whole bevy of gossiping old women, nay, silence the very noise of a belfry, with louder clappers than those of the steeple ; and if their unappeasable clamorousness were their only fault it would admit of some excuse ; but they are at the same time so fierce and quarrelsome, that they will wrangle bloodily for the least trifle, and be so over intent and eager, that they many times lose their game in the chase, and fright away that truth they are hunting for.

Yet self-conceit makes these nimble disputants such doughty champions, that armed with three or four close-linked syllogisms, they shall enter the lists with the greatest masters of reason, and not question the foiling of them in an irresistible baffle : nay, their obstinacy makes them so confident of their being in the right, that all the arguments in the world shall never convince them to the contrary.

Next to these come the philosophers, with their long beards and short cloaks, who esteem themselves as the only favorites of wisdom, and look upon the rest of mankind as the dirt and rubbish of the creation ; yet these men's happiness is only a frantic craziness of brain. They build castles in the air, and infinite worlds in a *vacuum.* They will give you to a hair's breadth the dimensions of the sun, moon, and stars, as easily as they would that of a flagon or pipkin :—they will give an elaborate account of the cause of thunder, of the origin of the winds, of the nature of eclipses, and of the most abstruse difficulties in physics, without the least

demur or hesitation, as if they had been admitted into the cabinet council of nature, or had been eye-witnesses to all the methods of creation ; though in fact nature does but laugh at all their puny conjectures : for they never yet made one considerable discovery, as appears from the fact that on no single point of the smallest moment have they unanimously agreed ; nothing being so plain or evident but that by some one it is opposed and contradicted.

But although they are ignorant of the unknown cause of the least insect's life, they vaunt however, and brag that they know all things, when indeed they are unable to construe the mechanism of their own bodies : nay, when they are so purblind as not to be able to see a stone's cast before them, yet they shall be as sharp-sighted as possible in spying-out ideas, universals, separate forms, first matters, quiddities, formalities, and a hundred such like niceties, so diminutively small, that were not their eyes extremely magnifying, all the art of optics could never make them discernible.

But they most despise the low, groveling vulgar when they bring out their parallels, triangles, circles, and other mathematical figures, drawn up in battalia, like so many spells and charms of conjuration in muster, with letters to refer to the explication of the several problems ; hereby raising devils as it were, only to have the credit of laying them, and exciting the wonder of the ordinary spectators, because they have not wit enough to understand the juggle.

Of these some undertake to profess themselves judicial astrologers, pretending to have correspondence with the

The Sophist.

stars, and so from their information can resolve any query ; and though it is all but a presumptuous imposture, yet some to be sure will be such great fools as to believe them.

The divines present themselves next ; but it may perhaps be most safe to pass them by, and not to touch upon so harsh a string as this subject would afford. Besides, the undertaking may be very hazardous, for they are a sort of men generally very hot and passionate; and should I provoke them, I doubt not would set upon me with a full cry, and force me with shame to recant, which if I stubbornly refused to do, they would presently brand me for a heretic, and thunder out an excommunication, which is their spiritual weapon to wound such as lift up a hand against them.

It is true, no men own a less dependence on Folly, yet have they reason to confess themselves indebted for no small obligations. For it is by one of my properties, self-love, that they fancy themselves, with their elder brother Paul, caught up into the third heaven, from whence, like shepherds indeed, they look down upon their flocks, (the laity,) grazing as it were, in the vales of the world below. They fence themselves in with so many surrounders of magisterial definitions, conclusions, corollaries, propositions explicit and implicit, that there is no falling in with them ; or if they do chance to be urged to a seeming non-plus, yet they find out so many evasions, that all the art of man can never bind them so fast, but that an easy distinction shall give them a starting-hole to escape the scandal of being baffled.

They will cut asunder the toughest argument with as

much ease as Alexander did the Gordian knot; they will thunder out so many rattling terms as shall affright an adversary into conviction. They are exquisitely dexterous in unfolding the most intricate mysteries; they will tell you to a tittle all the successive proceedings of Omnipotence in the creation of the universe; they will explain the precise manner of original sin being derived from our first parents; they will satisfy you in what manner, by what degrees, and in how long a time, our Savior was conceived in the Virgin's womb, and demonstrate in the consecrated wafer how accidents may subsist without a subject. Nay, these are accounted trivial, easy questions; they have yet far greater difficulties behind, which, notwithstanding, they solve with as much expedition as the former; as namely, whether supernatural generation requires any instant of time for its acting? whether Christ, as a son, bears a double and specifically distinct relation to God the Father, and his virgin mother? whether this proposition is possible to be true, that the first person of the Trinity hated the second? whether God who took our nature upon him in the form of a man, could as well have become a woman, a devil, a beast, an herb, or a stone? and if it were possible that if the Godhead had appeared in any shape of an inanimate substance, how he should then have preached his gospel? or how have been nailed to the cross? whether if St. Peter had celebrated the eucharist at the same time our Savior was hanging on the cross, the consecrated bread would have been transubstantiated into the same body that remained on the tree? whether in Christ's corporal presence in the sacramental wafer, his humanity be not

The Schoolman.

abstracted from his Godhead? whether after the resurrection we shall carnally eat and drink as we do in this life?

There are a thousand other more sublimated and refined niceities of notions, relations, quantities, formalities, quiddities, hæcceities, and such like abstrusities, as one would think no one could pry into, except he had not only such cat's eyes as to see best in the dark, but even such a piercing faculty as to see through an inch-board, and spy out what really never existed.

Add to these some of their tenets and beliefs, which are so absurd and extravagant, that the wildest fancies of the Stoics, which they so much disdain and decry as paradoxes, seem in comparison just and rational; as their maintaining, that it is a less aggravating fault to kill a hundred men, than for a poor cobbler to set a stitch on the sabbath-day; or, that it is more justifiable to do the greatest injury imaginable to others, than to tell the least lie ourselves.

And these subtleties are alchemized to a more refined sublimate by the abstracting brains of their several schoolmen; the Realists, the Nominalists, the Thomists, the Albertists, the Occamists, the Scotists; and these are not all, but the rehearsal of a few only, as a specimen of their divided sects; in each of which there is so much of deep learning, so much of unfathomable difficulty, that I believe the apostles themselves would stand in need of a new illuminating spirit, if they were to engage in any controversy with these new divines.

St. Paul, without question, had a full measure of faith, yet when he lays down faith to be the substance of things

not seen, these men carp at it for an imperfect definition, and would undertake to teach the apostles better logic. Thus, the same holy author wanted for nothing of the grace of charity, yet, say they, he describes and defines it but very inaccurately when he treats of it in the thirteenth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians.

The primitive disciples were very frequent in administering the holy sacrament, breaking bread from house to house; yet should they be asked of the *Terminus a quo* and the *Terminus ad quem*, the nature of transubstantiation? the possibility of one body being in several different places at the same time? the difference betwixt the several attributes of Christ in heaven, on the cross, and in the consecrated bread? what time is required for the transubstantiating of the bread into flesh? how it can be done by a short sentence pronounced by the priest, which sentence is a species of discreet quantity, that has no permanent *punctum?*

Were they asked, (I say,) these and several other confused queries, I do not believe they could answer so readily as our mincing school-men now-a-days take a pride in doing.

They were well acquainted with the Virgin Mary, yet none of them undertook to prove that she was preserved immaculate from original sin, as some of our divines now very hotly contend for.

St. Peter had the keys of heaven given to him, and that by our Savior himself, who had never entrusted him except he had known him capable of their management and custody; and yet it is much to be questioned whether Peter was sensible of that subtlety broached by

Scotus, that he may have the key of knowledge effectually for others who has no knowledge actually in himself.

Again, they baptized all nations, and yet never taught what was the formal, material, efficient, and final cause of baptism, and certainly never dreamt of distinguishing between a delible and an indelible character in this sacrament.

They worshiped in the spirit, following their master's injunction, "God is a spirit, and they which worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth;" yet it does not appear that it was ever revealed to them how divine adoration should be paid at the same time to our blessed Savior in heaven, and to his picture here below on a wall, drawn with arm extended, two fingers held out, a bald crown, and a circle round his head.

To reconcile these intricacies to an appearance of reason, requires three-score years in the study of metaphysics.

Farther, the apostles often mention *Grace*, yet never distinguish between *gratia*, *gratis data*, and *gratia gratificans*. They earnestly exhort us likewise to good works, yet never explain the difference between *Opus operans*, and *Opus operatum*. They very frequently press and invite us to seek after charity, without dividing it into infused and acquired, or determining whether it be a substance or an accident, a created or an uncreated being. They detested sin themselves, and warned others from the commission of it; and yet I am sure they could never have defined so dogmatically, as the Scotists have since done.

St. Paul, who in other's judgment is no less the chief of the apostles than he was in his own the chief of sinners, who being bred at the feet of Gamaliel, was certainly more eminently a scholar than any of the rest, yet he often exclaims against vain philosophy, warns us from debating about questions and strifes of words, and charges us to avoid profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science, falsely so called ; which he would not have done, if he had thought it worth his while to have become acquainted with them, which he might soon have been,—the disputes of that age being but small, and mere intelligible sophisms, in comparison to the vastly greater intricacies they are now improved into. But yet, however, our scholastic divines are so modest, that if they meet with any passage in St. Paul, or any other penman of holy writ, not modeled or critically disposed of as they could wish, they will not roughly condemn it, but bend it rather to a favorable interpretation, out of reverence to antiquity, and respect to the holy scriptures ; though indeed it were unreasonable to expect anything of this nature from the apostles, whose lord and master had given unto them to know the mysteries of God, but not those of philosophy.

If the same divines meet with anything of like nature unpalatable in St. Chrysostom, St. Basil, St. Hierom, or others of the fathers, they will not hesitate to appeal from their authority, and even to resolve that they lay under a mistake.

Yet these ancient fathers were they who confuted both the Jews and Heathen, though they both obstinately adhered to their respective prejudices ; they confuted

The Prayer for Forgiveness.

them, I say, yet rather by their virtuous lives and good works than by words and syllogisms: and the persons they thus proselyted were downright honest, well meaning people, such as understood plain sense better than any artificial pomp of reasoning: whereas if our divines should now set about the gaining of converts from paganism by their mataphysical subtleties, they would find that most of the persons they applied themselves to were either so ignorant as not at all to apprehend them, or so impudent as to scoff and deride them; or finally, so well skilled at the same weapons, that they would be able to keep their pass, and fence off all assaults of conviction: and in this last way the victory would be altogether as hopeless, as if two persons were combating, of so equal strength and dexterity, that it were impossible that either one should overpower the other.

If my judgment may be taken, I would advise Christians, in their next expedition to a holy war, instead of those many unsuccessful legions, which they have hitherto sent to encounter the Turks and Saracens, that they would furnish out their clamorous Scotists, their obstinate Occamists, their invincible Albertists, and all their forces of tough, crabbed and profound disputants: the engagement, I fancy, would be mighty pleasant, and the victory we may imagine unquestionably on our side. For which of the enemies would not veil their turbans at so solemn an appearance? Which of the fiercest Janizaries would not throw away his scimitar, and all the half-moons be eclipsed by the interposition of so glorious an army?

I suppose you mistrust I speak all this by way of jeer

and irony ; and well I may, since among divines themselves there are some so ingenuous as to despise these captious and frivolous impertinences. They look upon it as a kind of profane sacrilege, and a little less than blasphemous impiety, to determine of such niceties in religion, as ought rather to be the subject of an humble and uncontradicting faith, than of a scrupulous and inquisitive reason. They abhor defiling the mysteries of Christianity with an intermixture of heathenish philosophy, and judge it very improper to reduce divinity to an obscure speculative science, whose end is such a happiness as can be gained only by the means of practice.

But, alas, those notional divines, however condemned by the soberer judgment of others, are yet mightily pleased with themselves, and are so laboriously intent upon prosecuting their crabbed studies, that they cannot afford so much time as to read a single chapter in any one book of the whole bible.

And while they thus trifle away their misspent hours in trash and babble, they think they support the church with the props and pillars of propositions and syllogisms, no less effectually than Atlas is feigned by the poets to sustain on his shoulders the burden of a tottering world. Their privileges, too, and authority are very considerable. They can deal with any text of scripture as with a nose of wax, knead it into what shape best suits their interest ; and whatever conclusions they have dogmatically resolved upon, they would have them as irrepealably ratified as Solon's laws, and in as absolute force as the very decrees of the papal chair. If any be so bold as to remonstrate against their

Atlas Upholding the World.

Jove and Vulcan.

decisions, they will bring him on his knees to a recantation of his impudence.

They shall pronounce as irrevocably as an oracle : this proposition is scandalous,—that irreverant ; this has a smack of heresy, and that is bald and improper ; so that it is not the being baptized into the church, the believing of the scriptures, the giving credit to St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Hierom, St. Augustin, nay, or to St. Thomas Aquinas himself, that shall make a man a Christian, except he have the joint suffrage of these novices in learning, who have blessed the world no doubt with a great many discoveries, which had never come to light had they not struck the fire of subtlety out of the flint of obscurity. These fooleries must surely be a happy employment.

Farther, they make as many partitions and divisions in hell and purgatory, and describe as many different sorts and degrees of punishment, as if they were very well acquainted with the soil and situation of those infernal regions.

And to prepare a seat for the blessed above, they invent new orbs, and a stately empyrean heaven, so wide and spacious as if they had purposely contrived it, that the glorified saints might have room enough to walk, to feast, or to take any recreation.

With these and a thousand more such like toys, their heads are more stuffed and swelled than Jove, when he went big of Pallas in his brain, and was forced to use the midwifery of Vulcan's axe to ease him of his teeming burden.

Do not wonder, therefore, that at public disputations

they bind their heads with so many caps one over another; for this is to prevent the loss of their brains, which would otherwise break out from their uneasy confinement.

It affords likewise a pleasant scene of laughter, to listen to these divines in their hotly managed disputations, to see how proud they are of talking such hard gibberish, and stammering out such blundering distinctions, as the auditors perhaps may sometimes gape at, but seldom comprehend.

And they take such a liberty in their speaking of Latin, that they scorn to stick to the exactness of syntax or concord; pretending it is below the majesty of a divine to talk like a pedagogue, and be tied to the slavish observance of the rules of grammar.

Finally, they take a vast pride, among other citations, to allege the authority of their respected master, whose word they bear as profound a respect to as the Jews did to their ineffable *tetragrammaton*, and therefore they will be sure never to write it otherwise than in great letters, *MAGISTER NOSTER;* and if any happen to invert the order of the words, and say, *noster magister* instead of *magister noster*, they will presently exclaim against him as a pestilent heretic and underminer of the catholic faith.

The next to these are another sort of brainless fools, who style themselves monks, or members of religious orders, though they assume both titles very unjustly: for as to the last, they have very little religion in them; and as to the former, the etymology of the word monk implies a solitariness, or being alone; whereas they are

John, the Baptist.

so thick abroad that we cannot pass any street or alley without meeting them: and I cannot imagine which degree of men would be more hopelessly wretched if I did not stand their friend, and buoy them up in that lake of misery, which by the engagements of a religious vow they have voluntarily immerged themselves into.

But when these sort of men are so unwelcome to others, as that the very sight of them is thought ominous, I yet make them highly in love with themselves, and fond admirers of their own happiness. The first step whereunto they esteem a profound ignorance, thinking carnal knowledge a great enemy to their spiritual welfare, and seem confident of becoming greater proficients in divine mysteries, the less they are influenced with any human learning.

They imagine that they bear a sweet consort with the heavenly choir, when they tone out their daily tally of psalms, which they rehearse only by rote, without permitting their understanding or affections to go along with their voice.

Among these, some make a good and profitable trade by beggary, going about from house to house, not like the apostles, to break, but to beg, their bread; nay, they thrust themselves into all public-houses, come aboard the passage-boats, get into the traveling wagons, and omit no opportunity of time or place for craving people's charity, and doing a great deal of injury to common highway beggars by interfering with their traffic of alms.

And when they are thus voluntarily poor, destitute, not provided with two coats, nor with any money in their purse, they have the impudence to pretend that

they imitate the first disciples, whom their master expressly sent out in such an equipage.

It is amusing to observe how they regulate all their actions, as it were by weight and measure, to so exact a proportion, as if the whole loss of their religion depended upon the omission of the least punctilio.

Thus, they must be very critical in the precise number of knots requisite for tying on their sandals; what distinct colors their respective habits should be, and of what material made; how broad and long their girdles; how big, and in what fashion, their hoods; whether their bald crowns be to a hair's-breadth of the right cut; how many hours they must sleep, at what minute rise to prayers, etc.

And these several customs are altered according to the humors of different persons and places.

While they are sworn to the superstitious observance of these trifles, they not only despise all others, but are even inclined to fall out among themselves; for though they make profession of an apostolical charity, yet they will pick a quarrel, and be implacably passionate for such slight provocations as for putting on a coat the wrong way, for wearing clothes a little too dark in color, or any such nicety not worth speaking of.

Some are so obstinately superstitious that they will wear their upper garment of some coarse dog's hair stuff, and that next their skin as soft as silk: but others on the contrary, will have linen frocks outermost, and their shirts of wool, or hair. Some again will not touch a piece of money, though they make no scruple of the sin of drunkenness, and the lust of the flesh.

All their several orders are mindful of nothing more than of their being distinguished from each other by their different costumes and habits. They seem indeed not so careful of becoming like Christ, and of being known to be his disciples, as the being unlike to one another, and distinguishable for followers of their several founders.

A great part of their religion consists in their title. Some will be called Cordeliers, and these subdivided into Capuchines, Minors, Minims, and Mendicants; some again are styled Benedictines, others of the order of St. Bernard, others of that of St. Bridget; some are Augustin Monks, some Willielmites, and others Jacobists, as if the common name of Christian were too mean and vulgar.

Most of them place their greatest stress for salvation on a strict conformity to their foppish ceremonies, and a belief of their legendary traditions; wherein they fancy to have acquitted themselves with so much of supererogation, that one heaven can never be a condign reward for their meritorious life; little thinking that the Judge of all the earth at the last day shall put them off, with a who hath required these things at your hands; and call them to account only for the stewardship of his legacy which was the precept of love and charity.

It will be interesting to hear their pleas before the great tribunal: one will brag how he mortified his carnal appetite by feeding only upon fish: another will urge that he spent most of his time on earth in the divine exercise of singing psalms: a third will tell how many days he fasted, and what severe penance he imposed on

himself for the bringing his body into subjection : another shall produce in his own behalf as many ceremonies as would load a fleet of merchantmen : a fifth shall plead that in threescore years he never so much as touched a piece of money, except he fingered it through a thick pair of gloves : a sixth, to testify his former humility, shall bring along with him his sacred hood, so old and nasty, that any seaman had rather stand bareheaded on the deck, than put it on to defend his ears in the sharpest storms : the next that comes to answer for himself shall plead, that for fifty years together, he had lived like a sponge upon the same place, and was content never to change his homely habitation : another shall whisper softly, and tell the judge he has lost his voice by a continual singing of holy hymns and anthems : the next shall confess how he fell into a lethargy by a strict, reserved, and sedentary life ; and the last shall intimate that he has forgotten to speak, by having always kept silence, in obedience to the injunction of taking heed lest he should have offended with his tongue.

But amidst all their fine excuses our Savior shall interrupt them with this answer, "Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites, verily I know you not ; I left you but one precept, of loving one another, which I do not hear any one plead he has faithfully discharged ; I told you plainly in my gospel, without any parable, that my father's kingdom was prepared not for such as should lay claim to it by austerities, prayers, or fastings, but for those who should render themselves worthy of it by the exercise of faith, and the offices of charity : I cannot own such as depend on their own merits without a reli-

The Monk with the Sacred Hood.

ance on my mercy : as many of you therefore as trust to the broken reeds of your own deserts may even go and search out a new heaven, for you shall never enter into that, which from the foundations of the world was prepared only for such as are true of heart."

When these monks and friars shall meet with such a shameful repulse, and see that ploughmen and mechanics are admitted into that kingdom, from which they themselves are shut out, how sneakingly will they look, and how pitifully slink away?

Yet till this last trial they had more comfort of a future happiness, because more hopes of it, than any other class of men. And these persons are not only great in their own eyes, but highly esteemed and respected by others, especially those of the order of mendicants, whom none dare to offer any affront to, because as confessors they are intrusted with all the secrets of particular intrigues, which they are bound by oath not to discover ; yet many times, when they are almost drunk, they cannot keep their tongue so far within their head, as not to be babbling out some hints, and showing themselves so full, that they are in pain to be delivered.

If any person give them the least provocation they will surely be revenged on him, and in their next public harangue will give him such shrewd hints and reflections, that the whole congregation must needs take notice at whom they are leveled ; nor will they ever desist from this way of declaiming, till their mouth be stopped with a bribe to hold their tongue.

All their preaching is mere stage-playing, and their delivery the very transports of ridicule and drollery.

Good Lord! how mimical are their gestures? What heights and falls in their voices? What toning, what bawling, what singing, what squeaking, what grimaces, making of mouths, apes' faces, and distorting of their countenances; and this art of oratory, as a choice mystery, they convey down by tradition to succeeding ages.

The manner of it, I may adventure, thus farther to enlarge upon.

First, in a kind of mockery, they implore the Divine assistance, which they borrowed from the solemn custom of the poets: then their text, (suppose it be of *Charity*), they shall take their exordium as far off as from a description of the *river Nile in Egypt;* or if they are to discourse of the *Mystery of the Cross*, they shall begin with a story of *Bell and the Dragon;* or perchance, if their subject be of *Fasting*, for an entrance to their sermon they shall pass through the *Twelve Signs of the Zodiac;* or lastly, if they are to preach of *Faith*, they shall address themselves in a long mathematical account of the *Quadrature of the Circle.*

I myself once heard a great fool (a great scholar I would have said) undertaking in a laborious discourse to explain the mystery of the Holy Trinity; in the unfolding whereof, that he might show his wit and reading, and also satisfy itching ears, he proceeded in a new method, as by insisting on the letters, syllables, and proposition,—on the concord of noun and verb, and that of noun substantive, and noun adjective.

The auditors all wondered, and some mumbled to themselves that hemistitch of Horace:

"*Why all this needless trash?*"

Bell and the Dragon.

But at last he brought it thus far, that he could demonstrate the whole Trinity to be represented by these first rudiments of grammar, as clearly and plainly as it was possible for a mathematician to draw a triangle in the sand : and for the making of this grand discovery, this subtle divine had plodded so hard for eight months together, that he studied himself as blind as a beetle, the intenseness of the eye of his understanding overshadowing and extinguishing that of his body ; and yet he did not at all repent him of his blindness, but thinks the loss of his sight an easy purchase for the gain of glory and credit.

I heard at another time a grave divine, of fourscore years of age at least, so sour and hard-favored, that one would be apt to mistrust that he was Scotus Redivivus ; he taking upon him to treat of that mysterious name,—JESUS,—did very subtly pretend that in the very letters was contained, whatever could be said of it : for first, its being declined with only three cases, did expressly point out the trinity of persons, then that the nominative ended in S, the accusative in M, and the ablative in U, did imply some unspeakable mystery, *viz.*, that in words of those initial letters Christ was the *summus*, or beginning, the *medius*, or middle, and the *ultimus*, or end of all things.

There was yet a more abstruse riddle to be explained, which was by dividing the word JESUS into two parts, and separating the S in the middle from the two extreme syllables, making a kind of pentameter, the word consisting of five letters : and this intermedial S being in the Hebrew alphabet called sin, which in the English

language signifies what the Latins term *peccatum*, was urged to imply that the holy Jesus should purify us from all sin and wickedness.

Thus did the pulpiteer cant, while all the congregation, especially the brotherhood of divines, were so surprised at his odd way of preaching, that wonder served them, as grief did Niobe, and almost turned them into stones. I among the rest (as Horace describes Priapus viewing the enchantments of the two sorceresses, Canidia and Sagane) could no longer endure, but let fly a report of the effect it had upon me.

These impertinent introductions are not without reason condemned ; for of old, whenever Demosthenes among the Greeks, or Tully among the Latins, began their orations with so great a digression from the matter in hand, it was always looked upon as improper and inelegant, and indeed, were such a long-fetched exordium any token of a good invention, shepherds and ploughmen might lay claim to the title of men of greatest parts, since upon any argument it is easiest for them to talk about what is least to the purpose.

These preachers think their preamble (as we may well term it,) to be the most fashionable, when it is farthest from the subject they propose to treat of, while each auditor sits and wonders what they drive at, and many times mutters out the complaint of Virgil :—

"Whither doth all this jargon tend?"

In the third place, when they come to the division of their text, they shall give only a very short interpretation of the words, when a fuller explication of their sense ought to have been their only province.

Fourthly, after they are a little entered, they shall start some theological queries, far enough off from the matter in hand, and bandy it about pro and con till they lose it in the heat of the scuffle. And here they shall cite their doctors invincible, subtle, seraphic, cherubic, holy, irrefragable, and such like great names to confirm their several assertions. Then out they bring their syllogisms, their majors, their minors, conclusions, corollaries, suppositions, and distinctions, that will sooner terrify the congregation into an amazement, than persuade them into a conviction.

Now comes the fifth act, in which they must exert their utmost skill to come off with applause. Here, therefore, they fall a telling some sad lamentable story out of their legend, or some other fabulous history, and this they descant upon allegorically, tropologically, and analogically ; and so they draw to a conclusion of their discourse, which is a more brain sick chimera than ever Horace could describe in his *De Arte Poetica*, when he began :

Humano Capiti, &c.

Their praying is altogether as ridiculous as their preaching ; for imagining that in their addresses to heaven they should set out in a low and tremulous voice, as a token of dread and reverence, they begin therefore with such a soft whispering as if they were afraid any one should overhear what they said ; but when they are gone a little way, they clear up their pipes by degrees, and at last bawl out so loud as if, with Baal's priests, they were resolved to awake a sleeping god ; and then again, being told by rhetoricians that heights and falls,

and a different cadency in pronunciation, is a great advantage to the setting off any thing that is spoken, they will sometimes as it were mutter their words inwardly, and then of a sudden hollo them out, and be sure at last to finish in such a flat, faltering tone as if their spirits were spent, and they had run themselves out of breath. Lastly, they have read that most systems of rhetoric treat of the art of exciting laughter; therefore, for the effecting of this, they will sprinkle some jests and puns that must pass for ingenuity, though they are only the froth and folly of affectedness. Sometimes they will nibble at the wit of being satirical, though their utmost spleen is so toothless, that they suck rather than bite, tickle rather than scratch or wound: nor do they ever flatter more than at such times as they pretend to speak with greatest freedom.

Finally, all their actions are so buffoonish and mimical, that any would judge they had learned all their tricks of mountebanks and stage players, who in action it is true may perhaps outdo them, but in oratory there is so little odds between both, that it is hard to determine which seems of longest standing in the schools of eloquence. Yet these preachers, however ridiculous, meet with such hearers, who admire them as much as the people of Athens did Demosthenes, or the citizens of Rome could do Cicero: among which admirers are chiefly shopkeepers, and women, whose approbation and good opinion they only court; because the first, if they are humored, give them some snacks out of unjust gain, and the last come and confess to them with great regularity, and receive in return advice, comfort and consolation.

King David.

Thus much I suppose may suffice to make you sensible how much these cell-hermits and recluses are indebted to my bounty; who when they tyrannize over the consciences of the deluded laity with fopperies, juggles, and impostures, yet think themselves as eminently pious as St. Paul, St. Anthony, or any other of the saints; but these stage-divines, not less ungrateful disowners of their obligations to folly, than they are impudent pretenders to the profession of piety, I willingly take my leave of, and pass now to kings, princes, and courtiers, who paying me a devout acknowledgment, may justly challenge back the respect of being mentioned and taken notice of by me.

And first, had they wisdom enough to make a true judgment of things, they would find their own condition to be more despicable and slavish than that of their most menial subjects. For certainly none can esteem perjury or parricide a cheap purchase for a crown, if he doth but seriously reflect upon that weight of cares a princely diadem is loaded with.

He that sits at the helm of government acts in a public capacity, and so must sacrifice all private interest to the attainment of the common good; he must himself be conformable to those laws his prerogative exacts, or else he can expect no obedience paid them from others; he must have a strict eye over all his inferior magistrates and officers, or otherwise it is not to be doubted but that they will carelessly discharge their respective duties.

Every king, within his own territories, is placed for a shining example as it were in the firmament of his wide spread dominions, to prove either a glorious star of be-

nign influence, if his behavior be remarkably just and innocent, or else to impend as a threatening comet, if his blazing power be pestilent and hurtful.

Subjects move in a darker sphere, and so their wanderings and failings are less discernible; whereas princes, being fixed in a more exalted orb, and encompassed with a brighter dazzling lustre, their spots are more apparently visible, and their eclipses, or other defects, apparent to all that are inferior to them.

Kings are baited with so many temptations and opportunities to vice and immorality, such as are high feeding, liberty, flattery, luxury, and the like, that they must stand perpetually on their guard, to fence off those assaults that are always ready to be made upon them.

In fine, abating from treachery, hatred, dangers, fear, and a thousand other mischiefs impending on crowned heads, however uncontrollable they are this side the grave, yet after their reign here they must appear before a supremer judge, and there be called to an exact account for the discharge of that great stewardship which was committed to their trust.

If princes did but seriously consider (and consider they would if they were but wise), these many hardships of a royal life, they would be so perplexed in the result of their thoughts thereupon, as scarce to eat or sleep in quiet. But now by my assistance they leave all these cares to the gods, and mind only their own ease and pleasure, and therefore will admit none to their attendance but those who will divert them with sport and mirth, lest they should otherwise be seized and damped with the surprisal of sober thoughts. They think they

The Sovereign.

have sufficiently acquitted themselves in the duty of governing, if they do but ride constantly a hunting, breed up good race-horses, sell places and offices to those of the courtiers that will give most for them, and find out new ways for invading of their people's property, and securing a larger revenue to their own exchequer; for the procurement whereof they will always have some pretended claim and title; that though it be manifest extortion, yet it may bear the show of law and justice: and then they daub over their oppression with a submissive, flattering carriage, that they may so far insinuate into the affections of the vulgar, that they may not tumult nor rebel, but patiently crouch to burdens and exactions.

Let us feign now a person ignorant of the laws and constitutions of that realm he lives in, an enemy to the public good, studious only for his own private interest, addicted wholly to pleasures and delights, a hater of learning, a professed enemy to liberty and truth, careless and unmindful of the common concerns, taking all the measures of justice and honesty from the false beam of self-interest and advantage,—after this hang about his neck a gold chain, for an intimation that he ought to have all virtues linked together; then set a crown of gold and jewels on his head, for a token that he ought to overtop and outshine others in all commendable qualifications; next, put into his hand a royal sceptre for a symbol of justice and integrity; lastly, clothe him with purple, for an hieroglyphic of a tender love and affection to the commonwealth.

If a prince should look upon this portraiture, and draw

a comparison between that and himself, certainly he would be ashamed of his ensigns of majesty, and be afraid of being laughed out of them.

Next to kings themselves may come their courtiers, who, though they are for the most part a base, servile, cringing, low-spirited sort of flatterers, yet they look big, swell great, and have high thoughts of their honor and grandeur.

Their confidence appears upon all occasions ; yet in this one thing they are very modest, in that they are content to adorn their bodies with gold, jewels, purple, and other glorious ensigns of virtue and wisdom, but leave their minds empty and unfraught ; and taking the resemblance of goodness to themselves, turn over the truth and reality of it to others.

They think themselves mighty happy in that they can call the king master, and be allowed the familiarity of talking with him ; that they can volubly rehearse his several titles of august highness, supereminent excellence, and most serene majesty ; that they can boldly usher in any discourse, and that they have the complete knack of insinuation and flattery : for these are the arts that make them truly genteel and noble.

If you make a stricter enquiry after their other endowments, you shall find them mere sots and dolts. They will sleep generally till noon, and then their mercenary chaplains shall come to their bed-side, and entertain them perhaps with a short morning prayer.

As soon as they are dressed they must go to breakfast, and when that is done, immediately to dinner. When the cloth is taken away, then to cards, dice, tables, or

Searching the Scriptures.

some such like diversion. After this they must have one or two afternoon banquets, and so in the evening to supper. When they have supped then begins the game of drinking; the bottles are marshaled, the glasses ranked, and round go the healths and bumpers till they are carried to bed. And this is the constant method of passing away their hours, days, months, years, and ages.

I have many times taken great satisfaction, standing in the court, and seeing how the tawdry butterflies vie one with another. The ladies shall measure the height of their humors by the length of their trails, which must be borne up by a page behind. The nobles jostle one another to get nearest to the king's elbow, and wear gold chains of that weight and size, as require no less strength to carry than they do wealth to purchase.

And now for some reflections upon popes, cardinals, and bishops, who in pomp and splendor have almost equaled if not outdone secular princes.

Now, if any one considers that their upper crochet of white linen is to signify their unspotted purity and innocence; that their forked mitres, with both divisions tied together by the same knot, are to denote the joint knowledge of the Old and New Testament; that their always wearing gloves, represents their keeping their hands clean and undefiled from lucre and covetousness; that the pastoral staff implies the care of a flock committed to their charge; that the cross carried before them expresses their victory over all carnal affections; he (I say) that considers this, and much more of the like nature, must needs conclude that they are entrusted with a very weighty and difficult office. But,

alas, they think it sufficient if they can but feed themselves; and as to their flock, either commend them to the care of Christ himself, or commit them to the guidance of some inferior vicars and curates; not so much as remembering what their name of bishop imports, to wit, labor, pains, and diligence, but by base simoniacal contracts, they are in a profane sense, *Episcopi*, *i.e.*, overseers of their own gain and income.

So cardinals, in like manner, if they did but consider that the church supposes them to succeed in the room of the apostles; that therefore they must behave themselves as their predecessors, and so not be lords, but dispensers of spiritual gifts, of the disposal whereof they must one day render a strict account. Or if they would but reflect a little on their habit, and thus reason with themselves, What means this white upper garment but only an unspotted innocence? What signifies my inner purple but only an ardent love and zeal to God? What imports my outermost pall, so wide and long that it covers the whole mule when I ride, nay, should be big enough to cover a camel, but only a diffusive charity, that should spread itself for a succor and protection to all, by teaching, exhorting, comforting, reproving, admonishing, composing of differences, courageously withstanding wicked princes, and sacrificing for the safety of our flock our life and blood, as well as our wealth and riches; though indeed riches ought not to be at all possessed by such as boast themselves successors to the apostles, who were poor, needy, and destitute. I say, if they did but lay these considerations to heart they would never be so ambitious of being promoted to this honor, they would

The Bishop.

willingly resign it when conferred upon them, or at least would be as industrious, watchful and laborious as the primitive apostles were.

Now as to the popes of Rome, who pretend themselves Christ's vicars, if they would but imitate his exemplary life, in the being employed in an unintermitted course of preaching ; in the being attended with poverty, nakedness, hunger, and a contempt of this world ; if they did but consider the import of the word Pope, which signifies a father; or if they did but practice their surname of most holy, what order or degrees of men would be in a worse condition ?

There would be then no such vigorous making of parties and buying of votes in the Conclave, upon a vacancy of that See : and those who by bribery, or other indirect courses, should get themselves elected, would never secure their sitting firm in the chair by pistol, poison, force, and violence.

How much of their pleasure would be abated if they were but endowed with one dram of wisdom ? Wisdom, did I say ? Nay, with one grain of that salt which our Savior bade them not to lose the savor of.

All their riches, all their honors, their jurisdictions, their Peter's patrimony, their offices, their dispensations, their licenses, their indulgences, their long train of attendants (see in how short a compass I have abbreviated all their marketing of religion); in a word, all their perquisites would be forfeited and lost ; and in their room would succeed watchings, fastings, tears, prayers, sermons, hard studies, repenting sighs, and a thousand such like severe penalties : nay, what's yet more deplor-

able, it would then follow, that all their clerks, amanuenses, notaries, advocates, proctors, secretaries, the offices of grooms, ostlers, serving-men, pimps, (and somewhat else, which for modesty's sake I shall not mention); in short, all these troops of attendants, which depend on his holiness, would all lose their several employments. This indeed would be hard, but what yet remains would be more dreadful: the very Head of the Church, the spiritual prince, would then be brought from all his splendor to the poor equipage of a scrip and staff.

But all this is upon the supposition only that they understood the circumstances they are placed in; whereas now, by a wholesome neglect of thinking, they live as well as heart can wish.

Whatever of toil and drudgery belongs to their office, that they assign over to St. Peter or St. Paul, who have time enough to mind it; but if there be any thing of pleasure and grandeur, that they assume to themselves, as being "hereunto called:" so that by my influence no sort of people live more to their own ease and content.

They think to satisfy that Master they pretend to serve, our Lord and Savior, with their great state and magnificence, with the ceremonies of installments, with the titles of reverence and holiness, and with exercising their episcopal function only in blessing and cursing.

The working of miracles is old and out-dated; to teach the people is too laborious; to interpret scripture is to invade the prerogative of the schoolmen; to pray is too idle; to shed tears is cowardly and unmanly; to fast is too mean and sordid; to be easy and familiar is beneath the grandeur of him, who, without being sued to and

The Cardinal.

Fingering Money through a Thick Pair of Gloves.

intreated, will scarce give princes the honor of kissing his toe; finally, to die for religion is too self-denying; and to be crucified as their Lord of Life, is base and ignominious.

Their only weapons ought to be those of the Spirit; and of these indeed they are mighty liberal, as of their interdicts, their suspensions, their denunciations, their aggravations, their greater and lesser excommunications, and their roaring bulls, that fright whomsoever they are thundered against; and these most holy fathers never issue them out more frequently than against those, who, at the instigation of the devil, and not having the fear of God before their eyes, do feloniously and maliciously attempt to lessen and impair St. Peter's patrimony: and though that apostle tells our Savior in the gospel, in the name of all the other disciples, we have left all and followed you, yet they challenge as his inheritance, fields, towns, treasures, and large dominions; for the defending whereof, inflamed with a holy zeal, they fight with fire and sword, to the great loss and effusion of Christian blood, thinking they are apostolical maintainers of Christ's spouse, the church, when they have murdered all such as they call her enemies; though indeed the church has no enemies more bloody and tyrannical than such impious popes, who give dispensations for the not preaching of Christ; evacuate the main effect and design of our redemption by their pecuniary bribes and sales; adulterate the gospel by their forced interpretations, and undermining traditions; and lastly, by their lusts and wickedness grieve the Holy Spirit, and make their Savior's wounds to bleed anew.

Farther, when the Christian church has been all along first planted, then confirmed, and since established by the blood of her martyrs, as if Christ, her head, would be wanting in the same methods still of protecting her, they invert the order, and propagate their religion now by arms and violence, which was wont formerly to be done only with patience and suffering.

And though war be so brutish, as that it becomes beasts rather than men ; so extravagant, that the poets feigned it an effect of the furies ; so licentious, that it stops the course of all justice and honesty, so desperate, that it is best waged by ruffians and banditti, and so unchristian, that it is contrary to the express commands of the gospel ; yet magure all this, peace is too quiet, too inactive, and they must be engaged in the boisterousness of war.

Among which latter undertaking you shall have some popes so old that they can scarce creep, and yet they will put on a young, brisk resolution,—will resolve to stick at no pains, to spare no cost, nor to waive any inconvenience, so they may involve laws, religion, peace, and all other concerns, whether sacred or civil, in unappeasable tumults and distractions.

And yet some of their learned fawning courtiers will interpret this notorious madness for zeal, and piety, and fortitude, having found out the way how a man may draw his sword, and sheathe it in his brother's bowels, and yet not offend against the commandment whereby we are taught to love our neighbors as ourselves.

It is yet uncertain whether these Romish fathers have taken example from, or given precedent to, such other

The Threatenings of the Church.

Religion turned over to the Care of the Laity.

German bishops who, omitting their ecclesiastical habit, and other ceremonies, appear openly armed cap-a-pie, like so many champions and warriors, thinking no doubt that they come short of the duty of their function, if they die in any other place than the open field, fighting the battles of the Lord.

The inferior clergy, deeming it unmannerly not to conform to their patrons and diocesans, devoutly tug and fight for their tithes with syllogisms, and arguments, as fiercely as with swords, sticks, stones, or anything that came next to hand. When they read the rabbies, fathers, or other ancient writings, how quick-sighted are they in spying out any sentences that they may frighten the people with, and make them believe that more than the tenth is due, passing by whatever they meet with in the same authors that reminds them of the duty and difficulty of their own office.

They never consider that their shaven crown is a token that they should pare off and cut away all the superfluous lusts of this world, and give themselves wholly to divine meditation; but instead of this, our bald-pated priests think they have done enough, if they do but mumble over such a fardel of prayers ; which it is a wonder if God should hear or understand, when they whisper them so softly, and in so unknown a language, which they can scarce hear or understand themselves. This they have in common with other mechanics, that they are most subtle in the craft of getting money, and wonderfully skilled in their respective dues of tithes, offerings, perquisites, &c.

Thus they are all content to reap the profit, but as to

the burden, that they toss as a ball from one hand to another, and assign it over to any they can get or hire. For as secular princes have their judges and subordinate ministers to act in their name, and supply their stead; so ecclesiastical governors have their deputies, vicars, and curates, nay, many times turn over the whole care of religion to the laity. The laity, supposing they have nothing to do with the church (as if their baptismal vow did not initiate them members of it), make it over to the priests; of the priests again, those that are secular, thinking their title implies them to be a little too profane, assign this task over to the regulars, the regulars to the monks, the monks bandy it from one order to another, till it light upon the mendicants; they lay it upon the carthusians, which order alone keeps honesty and piety among them, but really keep them so close that nobody could ever yet see them.

Thus the Popes, thrusting out their sickle into the harvest of profit, leave all the other toil of spiritual husbandry to the bishops, the bishops bestow it upon the pastors, the pastors on their curates, and the curates commit it to the mendicants, who return it again to such as well know how to make good advantage of the flock, by securing the benefit of their fleece.

But I would not be thought purposely to expose the weaknesses of popes and priests, lest I should seem to recede from my title, and make a satire instead of a panegyric. Nor let any one imagine that I reflect on good princes, by commending of bad ones. I did this only in brief, to show that there is no one particular person can lead a comfortable life, except he be entered of my

All Concerns Arranged with Money.

society, and retain me for his friend. Nor indeed can it be otherwise, since fortune, that empress of the world, is so much in league and amity with me, that to wise men, she is always stingy, and sparing of her gifts, but is profusely liberal and lavish to fools.

Thus Timotheus, the Athenian commander, in all his expeditions, was a mirror of good luck, because he was a little underwitted; from him was occasioned the Grecian proverb, Ἡ εὕδοντος κύρτος ἁιρει, *The net fills, though the fisherman sleeps;* there is still another favorable proverb γλαὺξ ἵπταται, *The owl flies*, an omen of success. But against wise men are pointed these ill-aboding proverbs, Ἐν τετράδι γεννηθέντας, *Born under a bad planet;* equum habet seianum, *He cannot ride the fore-horse:* aurum tholosanum, *Ill-gotten goods will never prosper:* and more to the same purpose. But I forbear from any farther proverbializing, lest I should be thought to have rifled my Erasmus's adages.

To return, therefore, fortune we find still favoring the blunt, and flushing the forward; strokes and smoothes up fools, crowning all their undertakings with success; but wisdom makes her followers bashful, sneaking, and timorous, and therefore you see that they are commonly reduced to hard shifts, must grapple with poverty, cold and hunger, must lie recluse, despised, and unregarded, while fools roll in money, are advanced to dignities and offices, and in a word have the whole world at command.

If any one think it happy to be a favorite at court, and to manage the disposal of places and preferments, alas, this happiness is so far from being attainable by

wisdom, that the very suspicion of it would put a stop to all advancement.

Has any man a mind to raise himself a good estate? Alas, what dealer in the world would ever get a farthing if he be so wise as to scruple at perjury, blush at a lie, or stick at any fraud and over-reaching.

Farther, does any one appear a candidate for any ecclesiastical dignity? Why, an ass, or a plough-jobber, shall sooner gain it than a wise man. Again, are you in love with any handsome lady? Alas, woman-kind are so addicted to folly, that they will not at all listen to the courtship of a wise suitor. Finally, wherever there is any preparation made for mirth and jollity, all wise men are sure to be excluded from the company, lest they should stint the joy, and damp the frolic.

In a word, to what side soever we turn ourselves, to popes, princes, judges, magistrates, friends, enemies, rich or poor, all their concerns are managed by money, which because it is undervalued by wise men, therefore, in revenge to be sure, it never comes to them.

But now, though my praise and commendation might well be endless, yet it is requisite I should put some period to my speech. I'll therefore draw toward an end, when I have first confirmed what I have said by the authority of several authors. Which by way of farther proof I shall insist upon, partly, that I may not be thought to have said more in my own behalf than what will be justified by others; and partly, that the lawyers may not check me for citing no precedents nor allegations.

To imitate them therefore I will produce some re-

The Courtier.

The Brutish Man.

ports and authorities, though perhaps like theirs too, they are nothing to the purpose.

First, then, it is confessed almost to a proverb, that the art of dissembling is a very necessary accomplishment; and therefore it is a common verse among school-boys:—

To feign the fool when fit occasions rise,
Argues the being more completely wise.

It is easy therefore to realize how great a value ought to be put upon real folly, when the very shadow, and bare imitation of it, is so much esteemed. Horace, who in his epistles thus styles himself:—

My sleek-skinn'd corpse as smooth as if I lie
'Mong th' fatted swine of Epicurus's sty.

This poet (I say) gives this advice in one of his odes:—

Short Folly with your counsels mix.

The epithet of short, it is true, is a little improper. The same poet again has this passage elsewhere:—

Well-timed Folly has a sweet relish.

And in another place:—

I'd rather much be censured for a fool,
Than feel the lash and smart of wisdom's school.

Homer praises Telemachus as much as any one of his heroes, and yet he gives him the epithet of Νηπιος, *Silly:* and the Grecians generally use the same word to express children, as a token of their innocence. And what is the argument of all Homer's Iliads, but only as Horace observes:—

They kings and subjects dotages contain?

How positive also is Tully's commendation that all places are filled with fools? Now every excellence being measured by its extent, the goodness of folly must be of as large compass as those universal places she reaches to. But perhaps christians may slight the authority of a heathen. I could therefore, if I pleased, back and confirm the truth hereof by the citations of several texts of scripture; though herein it were perhaps my duty to beg leave of the divines, that I might so far intrench upon their prerogative.

Supposing a grant, the task being so difficult as to require the invocation of some aid and assistance; yet because it is unreasonable to put the muses to the expense and trouble of so tedious a journey, especially since the business is out of their sphere, I shall choose rather (while I am acting the divine, and venturing in their polemic difficulties), to wish myself for such time animated with Scotus, his bristling and prickly soul, which I would not care how afterwards it returned to his body, though for refinement it were stopped at a purgatory by the way.

I cannot but wish that I might wholly change my character, or at least that some grave divine, in my stead, might rehearse this part of the subject for me; for truly I suspect that somebody will accuse me of plundering the closets of those reverend men, while I pretend to so much divinity as must appear in my following discourse. Yet, however, it may not seem strange, that after so long and frequent a converse, I have gleaned some scraps from the divines; since Horace's wooden god by hearing his master read Homer, learned some words

of Greek ; and Lucian's cock, by long attention, could readily understand what any man spoke.

But now to the purpose, wishing myself success.

Ecclesiastes doth somewhere confess that there are an infinite number of fools. Now when he speaks of an infinite number, what does he else but imply that herein is included the whole race of mankind, except some very few, which I know not whether any one ever yet had the happiness to see?

The prophet Jeremiah speaks yet more plainly in his tenth chapter, where he saith, that *Every man is brutish in his knowledge.* He just before attributes wisdom to God alone, saying, that the *Wise men of the nations are altogether brutish and foolish.* And in the preceding chapter he gives this seasonable caution, *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom:* the reason is obvious, because no man hath truly any whereof to glory.

But to return to Ecclesiastes, when he saith, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity*, what else can we imagine his meaning to be, than that our whole life is nothing but one continued interlude of Folly?

This confirms that assertion of Tully, which is delivered in that noted passage we but just now mentioned, namely, that *All places swarm with fools.*

Farther, what does the son of Sirach mean when he saith in Ecclesiasticus, that the *Fool is changed as the moon*, while the *Wise man is fixed as the sun*, than only to hint out the folly of all mankind ; and that the name of wise is due to no other but the all-wise God? for all interpreters by Moon understand mankind, and by Sun that fountain of all light, the Almighty. The same

sense is implied in that saying of our Savior in the gospel, *There is none good but one, that is God:* for if whoever is not wise must be consequently a fool, and if, according to the Stoics, every man be wise so far only as he is good, the meaning of the text must be, all mortals are unavoidably fools ; and there is none wise but one, that is God.

Solomon also in the fifteenth chapter of his proverbs hath this expression, *Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom;* plainly intimating, that the wise man is attended with grief and vexation, while the foolish only roll in delight and pleasure. To the same purpose is that saying of his in the first chapter of Ecclesiastes, *In much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.* Again, it is confessed by the same preacher in the seventh chapter of the same book, *That the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.* This author himself had never attained to such a portion of wisdom, if he had not applied himself to a searching out the frailties and infirmities of human nature ; as, if you believe not me, may appear from his own words in his first chapter, *I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly;* where it is worthy to be observed that as to the order of words, Folly, for its advantage is put in the last place.

Thus Ecclesiastes wrote, and thus indeed did an ecclesiastical method require ; namely, that what has the precedence in dignity should come hindmost in rank and order, according to the tenor of that evangelical precept, *The last shall be first and the first shall be last.*

All is Vanity.

And in Ecclesiasticus likewise (whoever was the author of the holy book which bears that name) in the forty-fourth chapter, the excellency of folly above wisdom is positively acknowledged; the very words I shall not cite, till I have the advantage of an answer to a question I am proposing, this way of interrogating being frequently made use of by Plato in his dialogues between Socrates and other disputants.

I ask you then, what is it we usually hoard and lock up, things of greater esteem and value, or those which are more common, trite, and despicable?

Why are you so backward in making an answer?

Since you are so shy and reserved, I'll take the Greek proverb for a coherent reply; namely, τὴν ἐπὶ θύραις ὑδρίαν, *Foul water is thrown down the sink:* which saying, that no person may slight it, may be convenient to advertise that it comes from no meaner an author than that oracle of truth, Aristotle himself.

And indeed there is no one on this side Bedlam so mad as to throw out upon the dunghill his gold and jewels, but rather all persons have a close repository to preserve them in, and secure them under all the locks, bolts, and bars, that either art can contrive, or fears suggest; whereas the dirt, pebbles, and oyster-shells, that lie scattered in the streets, ye trample upon, pass by, and take no notice of.

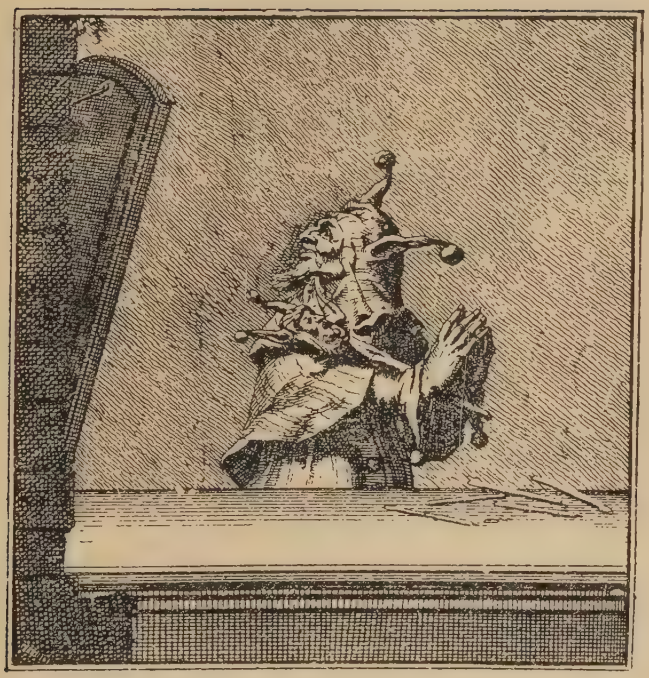
If then what is more valuable be coffered up, and what less so lies unregarded, it follows, that accordingly Folly should meet with a greater esteem than wisdom, because that wise author advises us to the keeping close and concealing the first, and exposing or laying open the

other: as take him now in his own words, *Better is he that hideth his folly than him that hideth his wisdom.* Beside, the sacred text doth oft ascribe innocence and sincerity to fools, while the wise man is apt to be a haughty scorner of all such as he thinks or believes to have less wit than himself: for so I understand that passage in the tenth chapter of Ecclesiastes, *When he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool.* Now what greater argument of candor or ingenuity can there be, than to demean himself equal with all others, and not think their deserts any way inferior to his own?

Folly is no such scandalous attribute, but that the wise Agur was not ashamed to confess it, in the thirtieth chapter of Proverbs: *Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man.*

Nay, St. Paul himself, that great doctor of the Gentiles, writing to his Corinthians, readily owns the name, saying, *If any man speak as a fool, I am more;* as if to have been less so had been a reproach and disgrace.

But perhaps I may be censured for misinterpreting this text by some modern annotators, who like crows pecking at one another's eyes, find fault, and correct all that went before them, each pretending that their own glosses contain the only true and genuine explication: among whom my Erasmus (whom I cannot but mention with respect) may challenge the second place, if not the precedency. This citation (say they) is purely impertinent; the meaning of the apostle is far different from what you dream of. He would not have these words so understood, as if he desired to be thought a greater fool



The Devotion to Folly.

The Prophei Jeremiah.

than the rest, but only when he had before said, *Are they ministers of Christ? so am I:* as if the comparing himself herein to others had been too little, he adds, *I am more*, thinking a bare equality not enough, unless he were even superior to those he compares himself with. This he would have to be believed as true; yet lest it might be thought offensive, as bordering too much on arrogance and conceit, he tempers and alleviates it by the covert of Folly. *I speak* (says he) *as a fool*, knowing it to be the peculiar privilege of fools to speak the truth, without giving offence. But what St. Paul's thoughts were when he wrote this, I leave for them to determine. In my own judgment at least I prefer the opinion of the good old tun-bellied divines, with whom it's safer and more creditable to err, than to be in the right with smattering, raw, novices.

Nor indeed should any one mind the late critics any more than the senseless chattering of a daw: especially since one of the most eminent of them (whose name I advisedly conceal, lest some of our wits should be taunting him with the Greek proverb, Ὄνος πρὸς λύραν, *ad lyram asinus*) magisterially and dogmatically descanting upon his text [*are they the ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more*] makes a distinct chapter, and (which without good store of logic he could never have done) adds a new section, and then gives this paraphrase, which I shall verbatim recite, that you may have his words materially, as well as formerly his sense (for that's one of their babbling distinctions). [*I speak as a fool*] that is, if the equaling myself to those false apostles would have been construed as the vaunt of a fool, I will

willingly be accounted a greater fool, by taking the place of them, and openly pleading, that as to their ministry, I not only come up even with them, but outstrip and go beyond them : though this same commentator a little after, as it were forgetting what he had just before delivered, tacks about and shifts to another interpretation.

But why do I insist upon any one particular example, when in general it is the public charter of all divines, to mould and bend the sacred oracles till they comply with their own fancy, spreading them (as Heaven by its Creator) like a curtain, closing together, or drawing them back as they please?

Thus indeed St. Paul himself minces and mangles some citations he makes use of, and seems to wrest them to a different sense from that for which they were first intended, as is confessed by the great linguist, St. Hierom.

Thus, when that apostle saw at Athens the inscription of an altar, he draws from it an argument for the proof of the christian religion ; but leaving out a great part of the sentence, which perhaps if fully recited might have prejudiced his cause, he mentions only the two last words, viz., *To the unknown God;* and this too not without alteration, for the whole inscription runs thus : *To the Gods of* Asia, Europe, *and* Africa, *to all foreign and unknown Gods.*

'Tis an imitation of the same pattern, I will warrant you, that our young divines, by leaving out four or five words in a place, and putting a false construction on the rest, can make any passage serviceable to their own pur-

The Pope.

pose ; though from the coherence of what went before, or follows after, the genuine meaning appears to be either wide enough, or perhaps quite contradictory to what they would thrust and impose upon it. In which knack the divines have grown now so expert, that the lawyers themselves begin to be jealous of an encroachment upon what was formerly their sole privilege and practice. And indeed what can they despair of proving, since the fore-mentioned commentator, (I had almost blundered out his name, but that I am restrained by fear of the same Greek proverbial sarcasm), did upon a text of St. Luke put an interpretation no more agreeable to the meaning of the piece than one contrary quality is to another.

The passage is this : when Judas's treachery was preparing to be executed, and accordingly it seemed requisite that all the disciples should be provided to guard and secure their assaulted master, our Savior, that he might piously caution them against reliance for his delivery on any worldly strength, asks them, whether in all their embassy they lacked anything, when he had sent them out so unfurnished for the performance of a long journey, that they had not so much as shoes to defend their feet from the injuries of flints and thorns, or a scrip to carry a meal's meat in ; and when they had answered that they lacked nothing, he adds, *But now he that hath a purse let him take it, and likewise a scrip : and he that hath no sword let him sell his garment, and buy one.*

Now when the whole doctrine of our Savior inculcates nothing more frequently than meekness, patience, and a

contempt of this world, is it not plain what the meaning of the advice is? Namely, that he might now dismiss his ambassadors in a more naked, defenceless condition. He does not only advise them to take no thought for shoes or scrip, but even commands them to part with the very clothes from their back, that so they might have the less incumbrance and entanglement in the going through their office and function.

He cautions them, it is true, to be furnished with a sword, yet not such a carnal one as rogues and highwaymen make use of for murder and bloodshed, but with the sword of the Spirit, which pierces through the heart, and searches out the innermost retirements of the soul, lopping off all our lust, and corrupt affections, and leaving nothing in possession of our breast but piety, zeal, and devotion.

This, I say, in my opinion is the most natural interpretation. But see how that divine misunderstands the subject.

By sword, says he, is meant defence against persecution; by scrip or purse, a sufficient quantity of provision; as if Christ had, by considering better of it, changed his mind in reference to that mean equipage, which he had before sent his disciples in, and therefore came now to a recantation of what he had formerly instituted: or as if he had forgotten what in time past he had told them, *Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you for my sake. Render not evil for evil*, for *blessed are the meek*, not the cruel: as if he had forgotten that he encouraged them by the examples of sparrows and lilies to take no

Self Admiration.

The Provident Preacher.

thought for the morrow; he gives them now another lesson, and charges them, rather than go *without a sword, to sell their garment, and buy one;* as if the going cold and naked were more excusable than the marching unarmed. And, as this author thinks all means which are requisite for the prevention or retaliation of injuries to be implied under the name of sword, so under that of scrip, he would have everything to be comprehended, which either the necessity or conveniency of life requires.

Thus does this provident commentator furnish out the disciples with halberts, spears, and guns, for the enterprise of preaching Christ crucified; he supplies them at the same time with pockets, bags, and portmanteaus, that they might carry their cupboards as well as their bellies always about them: he takes no notice how our Savior afterwards rebukes Peter for drawing that sword which he had just before so strictly charged him to buy; nor that it is ever recorded that the primitive Christians did by no ways withstand their heathen persecutors otherwise than with tears and prayers, which they would have exchanged more effectually for swords and bucklers, if they had thought this text would have borne them out.

There is another, and he of no mean credit, whom for respect to his person I shall forbear to name, who commenting upon that verse in the prophet Habakkuk (*I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction, and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble*), because tents were sometimes made of skins, he pretended that the word tents did here signify the skin of St. Bartholomew, who was flayed for a martyr.

I myself was lately at a divinity disputation (where I very often pay my attendance), where one of the opponents demanded a reason why it should be thought more proper to silence all heretics by sword and fagot, rather than convert them by moderate and sober arguments.

A certain cynical old blade, who bore the character of a divine, legible in the frowns and wrinkles of his face, not without a great deal of disdain answered, that it was the express injunction of St. Paul himself, in those directions to Titus (*A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject*), quoting it in Latin, where the word *reject* is *devita*, while all the auditory wondered at this citation, and deemed it no way applicable to his purpose; he at last explained himself, saying, that *devita* signified *de vita tollendum hereticum*, a heretic must be slain. Some smiled at his ignorance, but others approved of it as an orthodox comment. And however some disliked that such violence should be done to so easy a text, our hair-splitting and irrefragable doctor went on in triumph.

To prove it yet (says he) more undeniably, it is commanded in the old law [*Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live:*] now, then, every *Maleficus*, or witch, is to be killed, but an heretic is *Maleficus*, which in the Latin translation is put for a witch, *ergo*, *&c.*

All that were present wondered at the ingenuity of the person, and very devoutly embraced his opinion, never dreaming that the law was restrained only to magicians, sorcerers, and enchanters: for otherwise, if the word *Maleficus* signified what it most naturally implies, every

Slow of Heart.

evil-doer, then drunkenness and whoredom were to meet with the same capital punishment as witchcraft, magic, and sorcery.

But why should I squander away my time in a too tedious prosecution of this topic, which if drove on to the utmost would afford talk to eternity? I aim herein at no more than this, namely, that since those grave doctors take such a swinging range and latitude, I, who am but a smattering novice in divinity, may have the larger allowance for any slips or mistakes.

Now, therefore, I return to St. Paul, who uses these expressions [*Ye suffer fools gladly*], applying it to himself; and again [*As a fool receive me*], and [*That which I speak, I speak not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly*]; and in another place [*We are fools for Christ's sake*].

See how these commendations of Folly are equal to the author of them, both great and sacred. The same holy person does yet enjoin and command the being a fool, as a virtue of all others most requisite and necessary: for, says he, [*If any man seem to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise*]. Thus St. Luke records, how our Savior, after his resurrection, joining himself with two of his disciples traveling to Emmaus, at his first salutation he calls them fools, saying [*O fools and slow of heart to believe*]. Nor may this seem strange in comparison to what is yet farther delivered by St. Paul, who adventures to attribute something of Folly even to the all-wise God himself [*The foolishness of God* (says he) *is wiser than men*]; in which text St. Origen would not have the word foolishness any way

referred to men, or applicable to the same sense, wherein is to be understood that other passage of St. Paul [*The preaching of the cross to them that perish, foolishness*].

But why do I put myself to the trouble of citing so many proofs, since this one may suffice for all, namely, that in those mystical psalms, wherein David represents the type of Christ, it is there acknowledged by our Savior, in way of confession, that even he himself was guilty of Folly; *Thou* (says he) *O God knowest my foolishness?*

Nor is it without some reason that fools for their plainness and sincerity of heart have always been most acceptable to God Almighty. For as the princes of this world have shrewdly suspected, and carried a jealous eye over such of their subjects as were the most observant and deepest politicians (for thus Cæsar was afraid of the plodding Cassius, and Brutus thought himself secure enough from the careless drinking Anthony; Nero likewise mistrusted Seneca, and Dionysius would have been willingly rid of Plato), whereas they can all put greater confidence in such as are of less subtlety and contrivance.

So our Savior in like manner dislikes and condemns the wise and crafty, as St. Paul expressly declared in these words, *God hath chosen the foolish things of the world;* and again, *it pleased God by foolishness to save the world;* implying that by wisdom it could never have been saved.

Nay, God himself testifies as much when he speaks by the mouth of his prophet, *I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to naught the understanding of the learned.*

Again, our Savior does solemnly return his Father

thanks for that he had *hidden the mysteries of salvation from the wise, and revealed them unto babes*, i. e., to fools; for the original word νηπίοις, being opposed to σοφοῖς, if one signify wise, the other must foolish.

To the same purpose did our blessed Lord frequently condemn and upbraid the scribes, pharisees, and lawyers, while he carries himself kind and obliging to the unlearned multitude: for what otherwise can be the meaning of that tart denunciation, *Woe unto you scribes and pharisees*, than woe unto you wise men, whereas he seems chiefly delighted with children, women, and illiterate fishermen.

We may farther take notice, that among all the several kinds of brute creatures he shows greatest liking to such as are farthest distant from the subtlety of the fox. Thus in his progress to Jerusalem he chose to ride sitting upon an ass, though, if he pleased, he might have mounted the back of a lion with more of state, and as little of danger. The Holy Spirit chose rather likewise to descend from heaven in the shape of a simple guileless dove, than that of an eagle, kite, or other more lofty fowl.

Thus all along in the holy scriptures there are frequent metaphors and similitudes of the most inoffensive creatures, such as stags, hinds, lambs, and the like. Nay, those blessed souls that in the day of judgment are to be placed at our Savior's right hand are called sheep, which are the most senseless and stupid of all cattle, as is evidenced by Aristotle's Greek proverb, προβάτων ἦθος, a sheepishness of temper, *i. e.*, a dull, blockish, sleepy, unmanly humor. Yet of such a flock Christ is not ashamed

to profess himself the shepherd. Nay, he would not only have all his proselytes termed sheep, but even he himself would be called a lamb ; as when John the Baptist seeth Jesus coming unto him, he saith, *Behold the Lamb of God;* which same title is very often given to our Savior in the apocalypse.

All this amounts to no less than that all mortal men are fools, even the righteous and godly as well as sinners; nay, in some sense our blessed Lord himself, who, although he was *the wisdom of the Father*, yet to repair the infirmities of fallen man, he became in some measure a partaker of human Folly, when he *took our nature upon him, and was formed in fashion as a man ;* or when *God made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

Nor would he heal those breaches our sins had made by any other method than by the *foolishness of the cross*, published by the ignorant and unlearned apostles, to whom he frequently recommends the excellence of Folly, cautioning them against the infectionness of wisdom, by the several examples he proposes them to imitate, such as children, lilies, sparrows, mustard, and such like beings, which are either wholly inanimate, or at least devoid of reason and ingenuity, guided by no other conduct than that of instinct, without care, trouble or contrivance.

To the same intent the disciples were warned by their lord and master, that when they should be *brought unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates and powers*, they shall *take no thought how, or what thing they should answer, nor what they should say :* they were again strictly

forbid to *enquire into the times and seasons*, or to place any confidence in their own abilities, but to depend wholly upon divine assistance.

At the first peopling of paradise the Almighty had never laid so strict a charge on our father Adam to refrain from *eating of the tree of knowledge* except he had thereby forewarned him that the taste of knowledge would be the bane of all happiness.

St. Paul says expressly, that *knowledge puffeth up, i.e.*, it is fatal and poisonous. In pursuance whereunto St. Bernard interprets that the *exceeding high mountain*, whereon the devil had erected his seat, must have been the mountain of knowledge.

And perhaps this may be another argument which ought not to be omitted, namely, that Folly is acceptable, or at least excusable, with the gods, inasmuch, as they easily pass by the heedless failures of fools, while the miscarriages of such as are known to have more wit shall very hardly obtain a pardon ; nay, when a wise man comes to sue for an acquitment from any guilt, he must shroud himself under the patronage and pretext of Folly.

For thus in the twelfth of Numbers, Aaron entreats Moses to stay the leprosy of his sister Miriam, saying, *alas, my Lord, I beseech thee lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly.*

Thus, when David spared Saul's life, when he found him sleeping in a tent of Hachilah, not willing to *stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed*, Saul excuses his former severity by confessing, *Behold, I have played the fool and have erred exceedingly.*

David also, in much the same form, begs the remission of his sin from God Almighty with this prayer, *Lord, I pray thee take away the iniquity of thy servant, for I have done very foolishly;* as if he could not have hoped otherwise to have his pardon granted except he petitioned for it under the covert and mitigation of Folly.

The agreeable practice of our Savior is yet more convincing, who, when he hung upon the cross, prayed for his enemies, saying, *Father, forgive them*, urging no other plea in their behalf than that of their ignorance, *for they know not what they do.* To the same effect St. Paul in his first epistle to Timothy acknowledges he had been a blasphemer and a persecutor, *But* (saith he) *I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.* Now what is the meaning of the phrase [*I did it ignorantly*] but only this? My fault was occasioned from a misinformed Folly, not from a deliberate malice. What signifies [*I obtained mercy*] but only that I should not otherwise have obtained it had not folly and ignorance been my vindication?

To the same purpose is that other passage in the mysterious Psalmist, which I forgot to mention in its proper place, namely, *Oh, remember not the sins and offences of my youth!* the word which we render offences, is in Latin *ignorantias*, ignorances. Observe, the two things he alleges in his excuse are, first, his rawness of age, to which Folly and want of experience are constant attendants: and secondly, his ignorances, expressed in the plural number for an enhancement and aggravation of his foolishness.

But that I may not wear out this subject too far, to

Wise in the Distribution of Charity.

draw now towards a conclusion, it is observable that the Christian religion seems to have some relation to Folly, and no alliance at all with wisdom. Of the truth whereof, if you desire farther proof than my bare word, you may please, first, to consider, that children, women, old men, and fools, led as it were by a secret impulse of nature, are always most constant in repairing to church, and most zealous, devout and attentive in the performance of the several parts of divine service; nay, the first promulgators of the gospel, and the first converts to christianity, were men of plainness and simplicity, wholly unacquainted with secular policy or learning.

Farther, there are none more silly, or nearer their wits' end, than those who are too superstitiously religious. They are profusely lavish in their charity; they invite fresh affronts by an easy forgiveness of past injuries; they suffer themselves to be cheated and imposed upon by laying claim to the innocence of the dove; they make it the interest of no person to oblige them, because they will love, and *do good to their enemies*, as much as to the most endearing friends; they banish all pleasure, feeding upon the penance of watching, weeping, fasting, sorrow and reproach; they value not their lives, but with St. Paul, *wish to be dissolved*, and covet the fiery trial of martyrdom: in a word, they seem altogether so destitute of common sense, that their soul seems already separated from the dead and inactive body. And what else can we imagine all this to be than downright madness?

Is it the less strange therefore that at the feast of Pentecost the apostles should be thought drunk with

new wine? or that St. Paul was censured by Festus to have been beside himself?

And, since I have had the confidence to go thus far, I shall venture yet a little farther, and be so bold as to say this much more: All that final happiness which christians, through so many rubs and briars of difficulties, contend for, is at last no better than a sort of folly and madness.

This, no question, will be thought extravagantly spoken; but consider awhile, and deliberately examine the case.

First, then, the christians so far agree with the Platonists as to believe that the body is no better than a dungeon or prison for the confinement of the soul. That, therefore, while the soul is shackled to the walls of flesh, her soaring wings are impeded, and all her enlivening faculties clogged and fettered by the gross particles of matter, so that she may neither freely range after, nor, when happily overtaken, can quietly contemplate her proper object of truth.

Farther, Plato defines philosophy to be the meditation of death, because the one performs the same office with the other; namely, withdraws the mind from all visible and corporeal objects; therefore while the soul doth patiently actuate the several organs and members of the body, so long is a man accounted of a good and sound disposition; but when the soul, weary of her confinement, struggles to break jail, and fly beyond her cage of flesh and blood, then a man is censured at least for being maggoty and crack-brained; nay, if there be any defect in the external organs it is then termed downright madness.

Industry.

And yet many times persons thus affected shall have prophetic ecstasies of foretelling things to come, shall in a rapture talk languages they never before learned, and seem in all things actuated by something divine and extraordinary; and all this, no doubt, is only the effect of the soul's being more released from its engagement to the body, whereby it can with less impediment exert the energy of life and motion.

From hence, no doubt, has sprung an observation of like nature, confirmed now into a settled opinion, that *some long experienced souls in the world, before their dislodging, arrive to the height of prophetic spirits.*

If this disorder arises from an intemperance in religion and too high a strain of devotion, though it be of a somewhat differing sort, yet it is so near akin to the former, that a great part of mankind apprehend it as a mere madness; especially when persons of that superstitious humor are so pragmatical and singular as to separate and live apart as it were from all the world beside. So as they seem to have experienced what Plato dreams to have happened between some, who, enclosed in a dark cave, did only ruminate on the ideas and abstract speculations of entities; and one other of their company who had got abroad into the open light, and at his return tells them what a blind mistake they had lain under,—that he had seen the substance of what their dotage of imagination reached only in shadow; that, therefore, he could not but pity and regret their deluding dreams,—while they on the other side no less bewailed his frenzy, and turned him out of their society for a lunatic and madman.

Thus the vulgar are wholly taken up with those objects that are most familiar to their senses, beyond which they are apt to think all is but fairy-land; while those that are devoutly religious scorn to set their thoughts or affections on any things below, but mount their soul to the pursuit of incorporeal and invisible beings.

The former, in their marshaling the requisites of happiness, place riches in the front, the endowments of the body in the next rank, and leave the accomplishments of the soul to bring up the rear; nay, some will scarce believe there is any such thing at all as the soul, because they cannot literally see a reason for their faith; while the others pay their first fruits of service to that most simple and incomprehensible Being, God, and employ themselves next in providing for the happiness of that which comes nearest to their immortal soul, being not at all mindful of their corrupt bodily carcases, and even slighting money as the dirt and rubbish of the world.

Or if at any time some urging occasions require them to become entangled in secular affairs, they do it with regret, and a kind of ill-will, observing what St. Paul advises his *Corinthians*, *having wives*, *and yet being as though they had none; buying*, *and yet remaining as though they possessed not.*

There are between these two sorts of persons many differences in several other respects. As first, though all the senses have the same mutual relation to the body, yet some are more gross than others; as those five corporeal ones, of touching, hearing, smelling, seeing, tasting: whereas some again are more refined, and less

adulterated with matter; such are the memory, the understanding, and the will.

Now, the mind will always be most ready and expeditious at that to which it is naturally most inclined. Hence is it that a pious soul, employing all its power and abilities in the pressing after such things as are farthest removed from sense, is perfectly stupid and brutish in the management of any worldly affairs; while on the other side, the vulgar are so intent upon their business and employment, that they have not time to bestow one poor thought upon a future eternity.

From such ardor of divine meditation it was that Saint Bernard in his study drank oil instead of wine, and yet his thoughts were so taken up that he never observed the mistake.

Farther, among the passions of the soul, some have a greater communication with the body than others; as lust, the desire of meat and sleep, anger, pride, and envy: with these the pious man is at continual war, and irreconcilable enmity, while the vulgar cherish and foment them as the best comforts of life.

There are other affections of a middle nature, common and innate to every man; such as love to one's country, duty to parents, love to children, kindness to friends, and such like; to these the vulgar pay some respect, but the religious endeavor to supplant and eradicate them from their soul, except they can raise and sublimate them to the most refined pitch of virtue; so as to love or honor their parents, not barely under that character (for what did they do more than generate a body? nay, even for that we are primarily beholden to God, the first

parent of all mankind), but as good men only, upon whom is imprinted the lively image of that divine nature, which they esteem as the chief and only good, beyond whom nothing deserves to be beloved—nothing desired.

By the same rule they measure all the other offices or duties of life; in each of which, whatever is earthly or corporeal, shall be, if not wholly rejected, yet at least put behind what faith makes the *substance of things not seen*. Thus in the sacraments, and all other acts of religion, they make a difference between the outward appearance or body of them, and the more inward soul or spirit. As for instance, in fasting, they think it very ineffectual to abstain from flesh, or debar themselves of a meal's meat (which yet is all the vulgar understand by this duty), unless they likewise restrain their passions, subdue their anger, and mortify their pride; that the soul being thus disengaged from the entanglement of the body, may have a better relish for spiritual objects, and take a foretaste of heaven.

Thus (say they) in the holy Eucharist, though the outward form and ceremonies are not wholly to be despised, yet are these prejudicial, at least unprofitable, if as bare signs only they are not accompanied with the thing signified, which is *the body and blood of Christ*, whose death, till his second coming, we are hereby to represent by the vanquishing and burying of our vile affections that they may arise to a newness of life, and be united first to each other, then all to Christ.

These are the actions and meditations of the truly pious person; while the vulgar display all their religion

in crowding up close to the altar, in listening to the words of the priest, and in being very circumspect in the observance of each trifling ceremony.

Nor is it in such cases only as we have here given for instances, but through his whole course of life, that the pious man, without any regard to the baser materials of the body, interests himself wholly in a fixed intentness upon spiritual, invisible, and eternal objects.

Now since these persons stand off, and keep at so wide a distance between themselves, it is customary for them both to think each other mad; and were I to give my opinion as to which of the two the name doth most properly belong, I should, I confess, adjudge it to the religious; of the reasonableness whereof you may be farther convinced, if I proceed to demonstrate what I formerly hinted at, namely, that the ultimate happiness which religion proposes is no other than some sort of madness.

First, therefore, Plato dreamed somewhat of this nature when he tells us that the madness of lovers was of all other dispositions of the body most desirable; for he who is once thoroughly smitten with this passion, lives no longer within himself, but has removed his soul to the same place where he has settled his affections, and loses himself to find the object he so much dotes upon.

This straying now, and wandering of a soul from its own mansion, what is it better than a plain transport of madness? What else can be the meaning of those proverbial phrases, *non est apud se*, he is not himself; *ad te redi*, recover yourself; and *sibi redditus est*, he is come again to himself?

And, accordingly, as love is more hot and eager, so is

the madness, thence ensuing, more incurable and yet more happy.

Now what shall be that future happiness of glorified saints, which pious souls here on earth so earnestly groan for, but only that the spirit, as the more potent and prevalent victor, shall over-master and swallow up the body; and that the more easily, because while here below, the several members, by being mortified and kept in subjection, were the better prepared for this separating change; and afterward the spirit itself shall be lost and drowned in the abyss of beatific vision, so as the man's whole nature will then be beyond its own bounds and, transported into ecstasy and wonder, will feel some unspeakable influence from that omnipotent Being who makes all things completely blessed by assimilating them to his own likeness.

Now, although this happiness be then only consummated when souls at the general resurrection shall be reunited to their bodies, and both be clothed with immortality, yet because a religious life is but a continued meditation upon, and as it were a transcript of the joys of heaven, therefore to such persons is allowed some relish and foretaste of that pleasure here, which is to be their reward hereafter.

And although this indeed be but a small pittance of satisfaction compared with that future inexhaustible fountain of blessedness, yet it doth abundantly overbalance all worldly delights, were they all in conjunction set off to their best advantage; so great is the precedency of spiritual things before corporeal—of invisible before material and visible.

The Anticipation of Future Happiness.

This is what the apostle gives an eloquent description of, where he says by way of encouragement, that *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive those things which God hath prepared for them that love him.* This likewise is that better part which Mary chose, which shall not be taken from her, but perfected and completed by her:—mortal putting on immortality.

Now those who are thus devoutly affected (though few are so), undergo somewhat of a strange alteration very nearly approaching to madness; they speak many things in an abrupt and incoherent manner, as if they were actuated by some malevolent demon; they make an articulate noise, without any distinguishable sense or meaning; they sometimes twist and distort their faces into uncouth and antic forms; at one time being beyond measure cheerful, then as immoderately sullen; now sobbing, then laughing, and soon after sighing, as if they were perfectly distracted, and out of their senses. If they have any sober intervals of coming to themselves again, like St. Paul, they then confess, that *they were caught up they know not where,—whether in the body, or out of the body, they cannot tell;* as if they had been in a dead sleep or trance, they remember nothing of what they have heard, seen, said or done. This they only know, that their past delusion was a most desirable happiness; that therefore they bewail nothing more than the loss of it, nor wish for any greater joy than the quick return of it, and its more durable abode with them forever. And this (as I have said) is the foretaste or anticipation of future blessedness.

But I doubt not but that I have forgotten myself, and have already transgressed the bounds of modesty. However, if I have said anything too confidently or impertinently, be pleased to consider that it was spoken by Folly, and that under the person of a woman; yet at the same time remember the applicableness of that Greek proverb:

A fool oft speaks a seasonable truth.

Unless you will be so witty as to object that this makes no apology for me, because the word ἀνὴρ signifies a man, not a woman, and consequently my sex debars me from the benefit of that observation.

I perceive now, that, for a concluding treat, you expect a formal epilogue, and the summing up of all in a brief recitation; but I will assure you, you are grossly mistaken if you suppose that after such a hodge-podge medley of speech I should be able to recollect anything I have delivered. Beside, as it is an old proverb, μισῶ μνὰμοναν συμπόταν: *I hate a pot companion with a good memory;* so indeed I may as truly say, μισῶ μνὰμοναν ἀκροατήν: *I hate a hearer that will carry any thing away with him.* Wherefore, in short:

Farewell! live long, drink deep, be jolly,
Ye most illustrious votaries of folly!

LINES ON THE PRECEDING WORK.

THERE'S ne'er a blade of honor in the town,
But if you chance to term him *fool* and *clown*,
Straight *satisfaction* cries, and then with speed
The time, the place, and rapier's length's decreed.
Prodigious fops, I'll swear, which can't agree
To be call'd what 'tis their happiness to be:
Blest *Idiots!*
That in an humble sphere securely move,
And there the sweets of a safe *dullness* prove,
Nor envy the proud heights of those who range above.
Folly, sure friend of a misguided will,
Affords a kind excuse for doing ill;
And *Socrates*,—that prudent, thinking tool,
Had the gods lik'd him, would have prov'd a *fool.*
Methinks our author, when without a flaw,
The graces of his mistress he doth draw,
Wishes (if *Metempsychosis* be but true,
And souls do change their case, and act anew),
In his next life he surely might aspire
To the dull brains of some soft country squire,
Whose head with such like rudiments is fraught,
As in his youth his careful grannam taught.
And now (dear friend) how shall we to thy brow
Pay all those laurels which we justly owe?
For thou fresh honors to the work dost bring,
And to the theme: nor seems that pleasing thing,
Which he so well in *Latin* hath express'd,
Less comical in *English* garments dress'd;
Thy sentences are all so clearly wrought,
And so exactly plac'd is every thought,
That, which is more oblig'd we scarce can see
The subject by thine author, or himself by thee.

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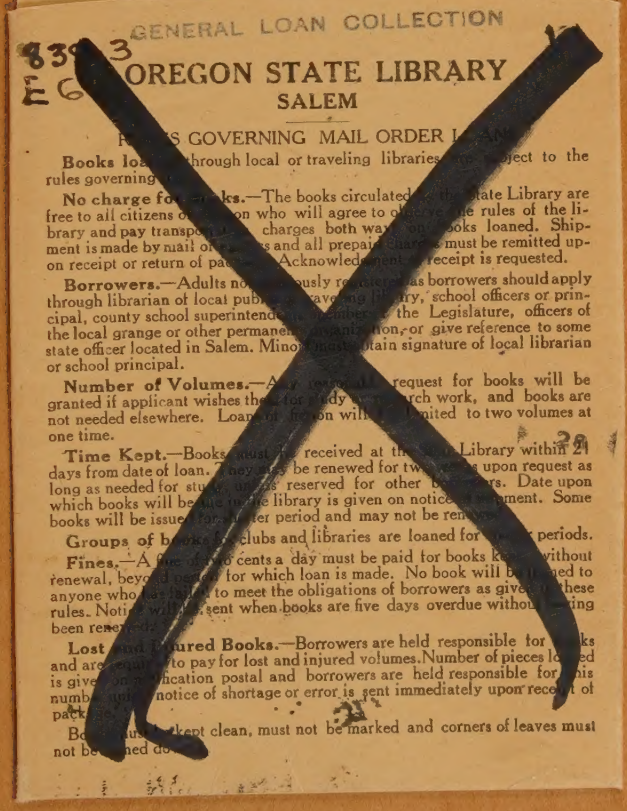
Erasmus, Desiderius, d.
1536.
Erasmus in praise of folly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